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THE GIFT OF

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APHRODITE

A ROMANCE

OF

ANCIENT HELLAS

BY

ERNST ECKSTEIN

Author of "Quintus Claudius," etc.

FROM THE GERMAN BY MARY J. SAFFORD

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APHRODITE.

CHAPTER I.

THE SCULPTOR FROM MYLASA.

IT was in the year 551 B. C. The shores of the Latmian gulf were glittering in the sunset radiance. On the narrow highway leading from Mylasa to the seaport of Miletus in Asia-Minor, a handsome, vigorous youth stood leaning on his staff. The ample folds of his girdled chiton were covered with dust, and a leather bundle, containing a few articles of clothing and a sculptor's tools, hung by a broad strap from his left shoulder. Acontius of Mylasa had toiled for three years as a pupil in the workshop of the famous Athenian sculptor Pharax, and now believed himself skilful enough to rely upon his own powers. Availing himself of the opportunity afforded by the voyage of an aristocratic friend of his master to Halicar-

nassus, he collected his scanty possessions, went on board a ship with the Athenian and, after a swift and pleasant voyage, reached the shore of Asia-Minor. From Halicarnassus he journeyed on foot to Mylasa, where he spent a few weeks in the modest home of his father, a wheelwright, who owned a small patch of land a few stadia outside of the city gates, and then early in the month of Boedromion — that is, late in the summer — set out for the famous maritime city of Miletus, whose theatres and temples, irradiated by the setting sun, now lay before him.

He had rested a few minutes and, while crouching on the scarp of the road, ate a piece of bread and a pomegranate. Now he stood erect, gazing keenly and boldly around him. The panorama was indeed enchanting. On the left appeared the city and the Tragasean Isles; farther away Mt. Mycale with its steep promontory, thrust like the point of a huge sword into the deep blue sea, and opposite the shore of the bay with its villages and villas — the whole steeped in marvellously brilliant light.

“I don’t wonder that Miletus loves art,” murmured Acontius. “Never—not even in Athens, have I beheld so bewitching a play of light—such a wealth of lines and colors.”

Shaking the dust from his robe, he cast a last glance towards the opposite shore of the bay, where two huge clumps of pine-trees, shimmering in the blue distance, marked the mouth of the world-renowned Maeander, and walked on, silently wondering whether his future destiny would move in as many curves and serpentine lines as the silvery river.

After a short time he reached a spacious villa, and cast a searching glance over the hedge into the garden which surrounded the house on three sides. The leafy paths were echoing with hilarious mirth, loud shouts, and merry laughter. Five or six young men, in the costume of aristocrats, had evidently just risen from a drinking-bout and now, still in the mood engendered by their symposium, were walking through the vine-clad arbors and between the laurel-hedges.

“Do you see now, Conon, how completely I

was in the right?" said the voice of a dark-eyed youth, whose pallid face even the abundant quantity of wine consumed had failed to flush. "You think you need only move an eye-lash, like Zeus when he makes Olympus tremble. But Neaira is discreet, and even the rich Conon will not lure her from the path of virtue."

The person addressed, a handsome man of thirty, the oldest of the company, measured young Oloros with a sarcastic smile.

"Do you suppose, my lad," he said in a resonant voice, "that I have any fancy for the Cydonian apples that grow by the roadside? Alcmene's son brought fruit from the Hesperides, and all his race are only allured by difficulties. I invited Neaira to the banquet because she was pointed out to me as an extraordinary exception to the rule, and should really have regretted it, had she yielded to the first essay like your Lysis-trate or that everlasting smiling Nike. Besides, didn't you notice that, spite of her youth, the little girl is a thorough artist? The double flute has never been better played in this house than

by pretty Neaira. Compared to her, Lysistrate was like Midas beside Apollo."

"That's what I call a digression," retorted Oloros, laughing. "You praise the artist because you could not conquer the woman."

The others now mingled in the gay conversation, for everybody knew that, spite of his mature years, the reputation of being irresistible was a vital matter to Conon, and though his vanity was usually spared, still after so many goblets of the heaviest Cyprian wine restraint ceased.

The more Conon strove to remain cool and indifferent, the more evident his vexation became, especially as, while pacing up and down, the effect of the wine drunk began to show itself in him also.

At this moment a lovely girl appeared between the Ionic pillars of the portico—a dainty, agile figure, with a very changeful, expressive face. Whoever gazed into pretty Neaira's sparkling eyes certainly would not have supposed that the flute-player differed greatly in point of reserve from her professional associates. These

eyes beamed with the glow of passion, the scarlet lips seemed to invite caresses far more ardently and yearningly than those of her two companions, whose flower-decked heads appeared behind her.

Conon, the irresistible owner of the villa, glanced across with a strange smile, as if considering some daring plan.

The artists, with a graceful farewell salutation, passed through the central avenue of trees and entered the high-road.

Two, languishing Nike and the notorious Lystrate, turned aside in the direction of the shore, where at twilight they were engaged to accompany some Egyptian dancing-women at the house of a wealthy parvenu.

Neaira hurried straight towards Miletus. The edge of her dress brushed the young sculptor who, charmed by the luxurious pleasure-grounds and beautiful villa, had stood motionless for the last few moments, watching, with the naive, frank interest of an artist, the events occurring beyond the walls. Looking him in the face as if surprised, she passed on.

Acontius followed her with his eyes. Her crocus-yellow robe glowed like gold against the deep-blue sky; her glittering bracelets, thick black curls, and the deep crimson hue of her sandal straps, which formed a most charming contrast to the peculiar lusterless white of her rounded ancles, were very beautiful and extremely picturesque.

The young artist's innocent scrutiny was rudely interrupted. Neaira had not gone a hundred paces from the villa when Conon, with a deeply-flushed face, emerged from the dense branches of the laurel hedge and, uttering a jesting exclamation, barred her way.

The young girl turned her head with a questioning glance.

“Sweet Neaira,” said Conon, smiling—he did not see Acontius and fancied himself alone—“you neglected to take the usual gratuity.”

Neaira put her hand in her girdle where she kept the coins Eurotas, Conon’s slave, had handed her before her departure, and answered emphatically:

“You are mistaken, Sir. I carry my *xenion* here—if you choose to give that name to the payment for my trivial services.”

“What you have earned is no gift. . . . Besides, I confess the word gratuity was not happily chosen. It is not I, but you, Neaira, who must give. In exchange for the rose from my garden you wear in your hair, grant me the rose of your blooming lips! That is the custom in Conon’s house. You see there is no human being in sight up or down the highway; and even if there was—no one would blame the pretty artist, you are created for love. Kiss me, sweet Neaira!”

A furtive glance from beneath the lovely maiden’s lashes sought Acontius, who had not yet been noticed by the excited Milesian. Then she answered courteously:

“You err again, son of Philippus! We artists are not created for love, but for the service of the immortal muse. If you want kisses, go through the Street of the Harbor in Miletus, where you will find what you seek;—or, still better, take a

wife, noble Conon, for you are gradually advancing in years."

A loud peal of laughter followed this covert bit of malice; the bold conqueror's friends had stolen after him, and now, full of the most exuberant mirth, stood behind the bushes.

This laughter snapped the already slender thread of Conon's patience.

"Little fool!" he said mockingly. "You ought to thank the goddess of love on your knees when Conon condescends to pay you such pretty compliments! Do you suppose I don't see through you? Or, do you want to make me believe you Artemis personified? You, whose eyes are blazing with whole quivers of Cupid's shafts? You're a clever girl, but not clever enough to deceive Conon. You make yourself rare and precious, in order to get something more than the passing jest of a moment. Look you, Neaira, but for this mistaken farce, I might actually have had the idea of choosing you for my sweetheart; now you'll have to be satisfied with what my caprice bestows upon you here, by the roadside. There—take it!"

He had thrown his strong arms around the astonished girl, and now bent down to press his lips to hers. But Neaira displayed an unexpected power of resistance. Bracing both hands firmly against his breast, she pushed back so vigorously that he could not accomplish his design.

The pair were still struggling when Acontius approached and, with gentle force, laid his right hand on the rich Milesian's arm.

"Do not forget, Sir," he said courteously, "that it ill beseems the strong to misuse their superior power even in jest."

On perceiving the stranger Conon had released the flute-player, but a flush that boded mischief crimsoned his brow.

"Who are you that dare to attack me here, on the open highway, like a robber?" he asked with glaring eyes.

"Only a wheelwright's son," replied Acontius with quiet dignity, "but freeborn, and therefore entitled to protect helplessness even against the assault of a rich and distinguished man; for I

hope that here, as well as in Athens, law rules and not the will of the wealthy."

"Insolent fellow!" exclaimed the Milesian, furiously. "Vagrant strangers are not called upon to watch over the laws here, but the fathers of the city, among whose families mine is numbered. I'll see whether an unruly tradesman is to prevent me from jesting with a wench of light repute."

While Conon was berating Acontius, Neaira had involuntarily fled behind the handsome youth who, from the very beginning of the scene, had aroused her eager interest. When Conon now prepared to continue his unwelcome jest, it was a matter of course that Acontius stood in his path.

"Pray pursue your way quietly," said Conon, with feigned indifference. "I will then forget that your unauthorized interference was an insult."

Acontius did not stir. Perhaps it was only a sort of bewilderment that made him stand so rigid and motionless.

"Do you hear?" cried the Milesian, still controlling himself.

As Acontius made no reply, Conon, over-

powered by sudden rage, seized him by the chest, intending to thrust him aside. But Acontius at the same moment grasped the wrist of the hand that buried itself so roughly in the folds of his robe, and pressed it with so iron a grip that Conon, with a quick cry, released the young artist's chiton.

Conon's friends, perceiving that the scene was taking an unpleasant turn, emerged from behind the laurel bushes and, with admirable impartiality, interposed.

"You are in the wrong, Conon," said Olorus. "The ugliest satyr, by stratagem and force, can kiss the loveliest nymph. So what do you prove, even if you succeed in taking coy Neaira by surprise? The stranger has spoken as a monitor, like the voice of your conscience, which would not permit so weighty an offence against the rules of the art of living."

The others upheld this opinion all the more eagerly because Acontius, having repelled the assault, displayed neither hostility nor triumphant scorn, but apologized to the richly-clad youths

with the most winning diffidence. Conon now deemed it advisable to take the affair lightly, at least outwardly, and contented himself with casting a secret glance of rage and hate at the stranger, after which he joined in his companions' jests.

While the party returned to the villa, Acontius walked towards the city by Neaira's side. It was perfectly natural that she should stammer a few words of thanks to the young man who had protected her from the rich Milesian's insolence, and as both were going the same way there was no reason to separate immediately after uttering them. Acontius was pleased with the young girl's vivacious manner, though the glowing ardor of her eyes sometimes disturbed him. Neaira's features had a strange blending of quiet winsomeness and half-repressed vehemence of feeling. The lines indicating a capacity for unusual fervor of passion were not unduly marked and prominent, but Acontius perceived at the first glance what others would not have detected until after years of acquaintanceship, and this discovery,

spite of his interest in the young girl, awakened a vague discomfort. Her sense of gratitude seemed to far exceed the meaning of her words, and the wheelwright's son felt as if it were weaving mysterious nets around him, and thereby robbing him of his intellectual freedom.

"Are you a native of Miletus?" he asked, after a time.

"No, I belong to the island of Dromiscus," she replied. "Yonder!"

She pointed across the gulf.

"Are your parents still alive?"

She slowly shook her head.

"No, stranger! Poor Neaira is all alone in the wide world. But what are you called, that I may in future address you by name?"

Acontius answered somewhat reluctantly. The feeling of being entangled in a net, which had just assailed him, returned. Then he told himself that he was indulging a foolish fancy; perhaps the favor of the gods had thrown this friendly, lovable creature in his way—now he would not enter Miletus as a total stranger, but

with a sympathizing companion. So he became more talkative, told her his plans and hopes, and finally asked her about Melanippus, the priest of Aphrodite, to whom he had been recommended by Pharax, the Athenian master. Neaira gave him all the information she could. Melanippus was considered kind and benevolent; whether he was able to be of real service to the youth, she did not know.

The road now sloped downward. At the next turn, they saw between the vineyards the south-eastern gate of the city.

“Only a few more stadia and you will reach the end of your journey,” said Neaira. Melanippus’ house is on the right of the market, opposite to the archon’s palace. Any one you ask will tell you. I won’t go with you myself — it would be a bad recommendation! We artists are considered of small repute . . .”

Acontius looked at her in surprise.

“And not without cause,” she added mischievously, “though the reputation of the community often weighs too heavily on the individual.”

He shook his head thoughtfully, then said kindly :

“ What I have seen to-day gives me a better opinion of Milesian artists. If agreeable to you, pray continue to bear me company.”

“ No, no ! You can’t miss the way. This street leads straight to the temple of Zeus, and there you turn to the right. If you wish to grant me your friendship, I will gratefully accept it, you can meet me in the morning in the Street of the Harbor, where I sell wreaths and flowers. Are you surprised, Acontius ? Living is costly in Miletus — and Neaira wants to bring her husband a goodly dowry some day,” she continued, smiling.

“ In the Street of the Harbor ?” Acontius repeated. “ Do you live there ?”

“ Oh, no !” replied the girl. “ That would be quite too aristocratic for a person like me, though my parents were once wealthy and no prophet predicted that I should ever be compelled to use for my support the accomplishments I then pursued for pastime. I live far away in the

western quarter. Let me refrain from mentioning the street and house, that you may not be tempted to enquire for me during your walks about the city."

They passed through the gate. At the next-cross-street, Neaira stopped.

"Our ways part here," she said thoughtfully. "May the gods bless the hour you enter Miletus."

She lingered an instant, and Acontius kindly extended his hand. With a graceful bend of the head, the young girl thanked him once more for the protection afforded, and then vanished among the noisy, motley throng of the great city.

Melanippus, the priest of Aphrodite, was pacing up and down the colonnade of the peristyle, when his slave announced the stranger's arrival. Accustomed to devote this hour of the day to quiet meditation, Melanippus was at first somewhat annoyed, but his frowning brow smoothed when he saw the frank countenance of the young man who, advancing with a firm, yet modest bearing, handed him the Athenian master's letter.

During its perusal the priest raised his bright,

pleasant eyes several times, and gazed with increasing interest at the slender figure whose bearing appeared to be in perfect harmony with what his Athenian host so eloquently described.

“So you are an artist,” he said, when he had finished the lines — “and a pupil of Pharax. Ten or twelve years ago I spent several months in Attica, and had the good fortune to know the distinguished sculptor and visit his fine studio. To have been his pupil would be sufficient recommendation in itself, but I read here that none of your companions equal you, either in industry or talent. Welcome, Acontius! Genuine talent has ever been to me an object of the most sacred sympathy, and I will gladly aid you to the extent of my feeble power, though genius is its own best patron. But, first of all — you are tired and hungry. Even the gods need food.”

While Acontius was stammering a few words of thanks, Melanippus called the slave who had conducted the youth to the aula. Clitiphon, a powerful, good-natured fellow, came through the curtained doorway of the neighboring exedra

where he had lighted the lamps — it was beginning to grow dark.

“ My friend,” said Melanippus, “ have a bath prepared for this youth, who is our guest, and then serve a supper.”

The slave retired, and returning at the end of five minutes, requested the stranger to accompany him.

Meantime Acontius had sat down with his kind host on a stone bench under the colonnade and briefly explained his plans. Melanippus commended the youth’s resolution to practise the utmost economy and self-denial, in order to be able, unhampered by the necessity of working for his daily bread, to devote all his energies to a great work of art he had planned.

“ I am not a rich man,” Melanippus had added, “ and I think economy and temperance the best friends of those who produce artistic work, therefore I advise you to be as frugal as possible with the little you possess. But — should your own means become exhausted before the work you intend to create is successfully completed, do

not shrink from telling me so. Melanippus always has enough to smooth the path of a struggling comrade. I say comrade, for the artist is also a priest of eternal beauty. Unfortunately the law forbids me to lodge you in my house longer than one night. But I am thoroughly familiar with every quarter of the city. Early to-morrow morning I will help you search; an unpretending, yet comfortable dwelling, where you can work undisturbed, will not be difficult to find."

After Acontius had refreshed himself in the bath and exchanged his dusty every-day chiton for a better one, he reclined at the table with Melanippus. The meal Clitiphon had served was a simple one—barley bread, honey, cold roast meat, almonds, and figs, to which was added some of the wine of the country mixed with water, wine that Conon and the spoiled guests of his symposium would have disdained. An animated conversation, however, spiced the simple repast. The longer Acontius listened to the priest's voice, the more clearly he perceived that he was in the presence of a thoroughly kind-hearted and, withal,

extremely unselfish man, a fresh, vigorous nature, whose friendship was worth winning. One who received a stranger with such cordial warmth, would take a friend into his inmost heart.

Three hours after sunset the priest of Aphrodite led his wearied guest to the hyperoon, the upper story where the rooms for strangers were located. Here Euarete, the housekeeper, had spread a clean couch. Melanippus wished his visitor a good night's sleep, and then went down-stairs to his own chamber, where being entirely at peace with himself and, moreover, a healthy man, he instantly fell asleep, while Acontius paced up and down his room an hour by the light of his flickering clay lamp, sometimes approaching the window, whose wooden shutters were only ajar, and gazing over the garden paths and the moonlit roofs of the city, then scanning the simple but artistic frescoes—copies of famous masterpieces—yet all the time half consciously following the play of his own thoughts, which dwelt now on gloomy Conon, now on pretty Neaira, but principally with Melanippus. The feelings that stirred

his soul always grew warmer and more joyous whenever this fatherly face rose before him. Had it not been for a certain expression of mirthfulness hovering around the priest's eloquent lips, he would have resembled Zeus, as he sat throned in the temple at Athens on the other side of the archipelago. But what Melanippus lost in god-like dignity he gained in warm humanity. Acontius realized that he could not only esteem and reverence this man, but love him with all his heart.

At early dawn the next morning the youth, filled with new vigor, rose from his couch. Faint sounds of awakening life had already been rising from the ground-floor for some time. Melanippus was an early riser. He liked to hurry down to the strand before sunrise, where he revelled in the view of the sea and the majestic spectacle of the dawning day. Meantime the housekeeper had set the slaves to work cleaning the house, washing both court-yards, and preparing the *akratisma* (slices of bread and wine).

When Acontius entered the aula, Melanippus

had not returned from his morning walk, so the young sculptor found time to have a little chat with the chief slave, Clitiphon. Without showing undue curiosity, he learned from the loquacious slave that Melanippus was not, as he supposed, a widower, but unmarried.

“It may surprise you,” whispered Clitiphon, “that the chief-priest of the divine Aphrodite apparently lives in contradiction to her laws; for one would suppose that whoever has to daily offer sacrifices to the goddess ought, above all other men, to acknowledge her supremacy and have Hymen’s torches lighted. Indeed, as you will learn, priests as a rule are married; in some cities it is even required by law, and Miletus, too, would have preferred to have our master submit to this custom. But no mortal can battle against fate, nor even the immortal gods.”

He paused as though expecting a question from Acontius but, with an air of importance, instantly continued. “No one knows the particulars, but it is rumored that Melanippus remained unwedded because the father of the girl who won his heart

when a youth forbade the marriage. His was not the love that exists now, fleeting and external, but deep and ardent, as in the olden days when Leander plunged into the waves of the Hellespont to see his Hero. And the maiden is said to have loved him in return; but you know our Ionian custom. Young girls' inclinations are rarely consulted. Melanippus was poor and low-born; her father was rich and distinguished, so he compelled his daughter to bestow her hand upon a husband who was her equal in birth."

"I hope you are not telling me secrets that ought to be concealed," said Acontius.

"Oh! no," replied Clitiphon. "I am speaking only of what is well known. Every boy in Miletus talks about Melanippus' early love. Of course no one knows the name of the girl he wooed, for the affair was managed very quietly and no one has the courage to question our master. One thing is certain, that for years the disappointed suitor was filled with the deepest grief and has never again thought of giving his house a mistress."

Steps were heard in the passage. Melanippus entered the aula, held out his hand to the youth, and said in a deep, musical voice :

“ A beautiful day, Acontius ! The sun, which is barely gilding the edge of the court-yard, is scattering outside the whole largess of his most fiery rays ! Indeed, when I gaze over the ever mysterious sea, I understand the source of the pious legend that Aphrodite, the incarnation of infinite beauty, rose from the depths of the waves. The people are constantly asking the origin of their gods, for they measure what is incomprehensible by earthly standards ; but this question was never more beautifully answered than by the exquisite myth of the foam-born goddess.”

“ That is true,” replied Acontius. “ Aphrodite, eternal beauty, is as fathomless as the waves of the sea. All real beauty is a mystery to us ; but the greatest enigma is the fire beauty kindles, and which we call love. A true artist should represent the goddess with this strange mystery resting, like a veil, upon the lovely dreaming face.”

“ Will you try it ?” asked the priest.

“Not yet,” replied Acontius, modestly. “I lack the firm, skilled hand: mine must first become accustomed to act independently and learn to create without the advice of the experienced master; I also need a female model from whom I could borrow the features of such an Aphrodite. You know the artist creates nothing out of his own mind. What distinguishes him from other men is his talent for observing, and reproducing in a work of art what he has beheld. Never, not even in the streets of Athens, have I seen a face which corresponds with the image I cherish in my heart.”

“I knew one,” said the priest thoughtfully, “but fate has now destroyed what only the chisel could have perpetuated.”

After breakfast Melanippus commanded his attentive slave, Clitiphon, to throw his himation over his shoulders and went with the youth to the market, which was already beginning to be filled with representatives of the most varied classes of the people.

The two men’s way led them past the palace

of the Archon Charidemus, a ponderous building, somewhat resembling a fortress, which on the side facing the market showed only unbroken walls, the huge gate, and the portico known as the propylæum. Just as Melanippus and Acontius were passing, the archon himself, surrounded by a brilliant train of followers, appeared between the pillars. Acontius noticed that a sudden flush tinged the cheeks of the priest of Aphrodite. Melanippus bowed; Charidemus returned the greeting with the quiet courtesy of the aristocrat who is conscious of his position.

“The chief magistrate of our city,” said the priest, when they had passed out of hearing, “Charidemus, a stern, unyielding man, but—even his enemies must admit—animated by good intentions and the most ardent patriotism.”

“He has a princely bearing,” replied Acontius, “and seems fond of display; even in Athens I have seen no retinue of attendants so brilliant in gold and purple. It is almost Persian.”

“The people like this parade,” said the priest. “Yet it should not be denied that Charidemus is

far from adopting the overloaded luxury of the East. Though fond of display, he is still a Greek and, even amid his extravagance, maintains a tasteful moderation."

They walked on. The streets grew narrower and more insignificant, then broader again but still less aristocratic, until the two companions at last stopped in front of a little whitewashed house on the farthest edge of the suburb.

"Coronis, the widow of a Paphlagonian gardener, lives here," said the priest. "Contenting herself with the kitchen, she rents the few other rooms in her dwelling. A short time ago a young sculptor of great promise occupied them, but he was killed at a drinking-bout by a companion who was seized with a sudden fit of rage. Prices here are moderate. If, contrary to my expectations, Coronis has no vacant chambers, she will direct us where we can find what we want without delay."

He knocked on the door. A pleasant-faced old woman with snow-white hair opened it. Melanippus held out his hand to the startled

dame, permitted her to kiss his finger-tips with her withered lips, and then mentioned the purpose of his visit.

“That happens capitally!” said Coronis. “Come in, most revered Melanippus: “I’ll show you what I can give the youth. The workshop of the Lydian who was killed in a drunken brawl, a light, pleasant room, with a wide door and even a window.”

While speaking, she led the two men across the court-yard to the oblong apartment formerly occupied by the Lydian. The room was comparatively light and spacious, the furniture of course comprised only the most necessary articles. But what cared Acontius for costly rugs and bronze seats with panther-feet? The less the room resembled a domation in aristocratic Athenian houses, the more entirely he would be forced to seek all the adornment of his life in his own creative art.

The sum Coronis asked for board and lodging was so small that he immediately closed the bargain. He had instantly calculated that, at this

price, his ready money would last for more than eight months. And what might not happen in that time !

“So this matter is settled !” said the priest. “And now, Acontius,— you won’t forget, my boy, that in Melanippus’ house you will always find a friend to welcome you with open arms ! Farewell — may good-fortune attend your work, and all your plans prosper.”

He left the youth with his new hostess, but after a short rest Acontius went out in the neighborhood to make some necessary purchases. The dealers’ slaves at once carried what he bought to his lodgings — clay, all sorts of vessels, some wooden plates, and above all a block of marble the height of a man, which was placed in the middle of the room between the door and window.

CHAPTER II.

SEEKING A MODEL.

AFTER Acontius had thus dispatched his most important business, he eat a few mouthfuls and then went by the shortest way to the Street of the Harbor. He felt a vague desire to see pretty Neaira again; for in this remote suburb, far from the kind priest who had welcomed him in so paternal a fashion, he was a little lonely. But he had learned from Coronis that, at noon, the great circle intersected by the street was the stand of numerous models, who often urgently pressed artists and sculptors to employ them, though their services were always offered in exchange for a large sum of money. The work Acontius intended to undertake first had been clearly defined in his mind ever since his voyage to Halicarnassus. He meant to approach the highest goal gradually, and learn to master graceful

subjects before choosing bewitching or divinely-noble ones. The statue which he had not only planned in imagination, but elaborated down to the most minute detail in numerous sketches, was the figure of a shepherdess who, being welcomed on her return home by her dog, kindly pats the head of the animal looking up at her. It could not be difficult, Acontius thought, to find a girl's figure which would in some degree resemble the image hovering before his mind.

So he walked through the narrow, crooked streets until suddenly the Street of the Harbor appeared before him in all its glittering splendor, stretching eastward beyond the circle until lost in the country, the centre of the traffic and stir of the vast city, since the quieter business of the citizens, especially the affairs of the city and government, was mainly centred in the market-place.

Acontius gazed intently at the numerous galleys with two or three banks of oars lying at anchor between the splendid stone piers, the magnificent merchant vessels with skilfully-carved keels, and farther out the gleaming sails of the

fishing-boats, hundreds of which covered the broad blue expanse of the open archipelago and the hill-encircled gulf. Seafaring men from all the quarters of the earth known at that time: boorish Heniochi, men from distant Colchis, Phœnicians with sharp, aquiline noses and blue-black hair, Cilician sailors and Egyptian merchants, skippers, fruit-sellers, and brokers, elbowed each other in the glittering sunlight or sought the shade of the long rows of houses, which displayed a strange blending of aristocratic splendor and plebeian ease: the luxurious residences of rich wholesale merchants beside the smoky cook-shops and densely-thronged taverns; palaces beside the stalls of exchangers.

Acontius watched the motley scene with the interest of a novice; for in Athens the port was far away from the centre of the city and other things fixed the attention of the spectator.

He walked on.

The throng became more elegant and less noisy. A cross-street, at whose extreme end appeared the long side-wall of the great temple of

Zeus, seemed to divide the bustling portion of the Street of the Harbor from the quieter and more aristocratic section. A curve of the shore here interposed a wider space between the street and the vessels lying at anchor, among which were only a few large ships, the rest consisted of flat-boats for the local traffic and the coasting trade in the gulf. A row of plane and maple-trees sheltered the part of the street that did not lie in the shadow of the houses.

Acontius, for the first time, now had an opportunity of observing the youthful aristocrats of Miletus at home. Far from displaying the careless elegance of the revellers whom he had seen the day before in the leafy avenues of Conon's pleasure-grounds, these young men were somewhat prim in their attire and walked with a measured tread that was almost theatrical.

A few hundred paces beyond the cross-street he saw half a dozen young girls in gay garments sitting on the steps of a marble monument, and surrounded by ten or twelve young aristocrats. These were "the flower-girls of Creon's statue."

The monument represented the archon Creon, who during the fifteen years of his official rule had built the greater part of the eastern end of the Street of the Harbor.

The sculptor recognized in one of these youths the slender, clever Olorus, whose cool irony at the banquet in Conon's villa the day before had so irritated the host, and thus caused the unpleasant scenes that followed.

As Acontius approached to see if Neaira was among the girls—which was not the case—Olorus turned his head. A peculiar smile betrayed that he, too, remembered yesterday's meeting, but the look which rested a few seconds on the young artist's flushed face was no unfriendly one.

Acontius walked on. At the end of ten minutes he reached the circle where, according to Coronis' statement, the models stayed. But, either the beautiful Milesians of whom Acontius had dreamed considered the gay society of men like Conon a more desirable occupation of their time than to give their services to painters and sculptors, or the opinion prevailing in good so-

ciety in Miletus, that such services when paid for were disgraceful, had reached the models: in short, the number walking arm-in-arm between the laurel hedges was extremely small, and the few fair ones he met seemed by no means suited to his purpose. They either had the soft, languishing faces of the women of Asia Minor, or they were austere beauties who might have served as types of Hera or Pallas. The bright, vivacious, mobile countenance he needed was nowhere to be found. Finally, after the lapse of half an hour, a fair-haired Lacedæmonian, who was really unique in her way, passed by; she would have suited him admirably. Phyllis, however, was so thoroughly conscious of her charms that she demanded an exorbitant sum. Acontius dared not offer her a smaller one, especially as even this lower price would have far exceeded his means.

“Are you the only ones?” he asked a pale, somewhat thin Rhodian.

“Certainly,” replied the girl; “but I should think we were enough.”

Acontius, lost in thought, watched the bar-

gaining some of the older artists were in the habit of carrying on with the girls, then, thoroughly out of humor, set forth on his way home.

Not far from the marble statue, on whose steps the six flower-girls had taken their post, he saw a dense crowd.

The sellers, whose attention a short time before had been so eagerly claimed, were scarcely employed; only one elderly fop was talking with the prettiest. The others were gazing sullenly towards the spot where some special attraction must enchain the men flocking thither from every quarter.

Acontius, with the bitter feeling that he was in no haste since, without a model, he would very soon be compelled to stop his work, approached the ever-increasing group and saw in the midst of the crowd pretty Neaira, who pressing her little willow basket gracefully to her bosom distributed with her right hand tastefully-arranged garlands and bouquets. She really looked extremely charming in her rose-colored robe, whose upper edge, richly wrought with silver, surrounded her

beautiful neck and was confined on both shoulders with artistic clasps.

"Give it to me, to me, Neaira," echoed on all sides.

Her little basket was emptied in an instant and silver coins rained into the woven willow, while right and left smiling lips thanked her.

The last person who had bought a bouquet was Conon. The spoiled aristocrat's defeat the day before had robbed him of sleep. Hitherto Neaira had been an object of indifference; now she began to interest him. Two hours after sunrise he entered his chariot, having learned from Olorus that the artist, who had so suddenly come over from the island of Dromiscus, sold flowers at noon by the monument of the archon Creon. This would be the first and most convenient opportunity of speaking to her.

Conon had forced his way close to the girl. The money which, instead of flinging into her basket, he now with a shade of formality pressed into her hand, was no piece of silver, but a Persian gold coin. In contrast to the familiar tone

he had adopted the day before on the highway, he now displayed a chivalrous reserve.

“Neaira,” he murmured, “I sincerely deplore yesterday’s matter, which you must attribute to the undue excitement of wine. Won’t you give me an opportunity to show you the earnestness of my repentance? May I explain to you undisturbed . . . ?”

“By Zeus!” cried Neaira, laughing, “I am not one of those who bear malice. I saw that the divine wantonness of Lyaios was speaking from your soul. Meantime, receive in exchange for the gold piece this handful of drachmae.”

“No indeed!” replied Conon. “Surely you will allow me to pay for your skill as I choose. But answer me: are you disposed . . . ?”

“I don’t understand you, sir,” said Neaira, shrugging her shoulders. “The matter is settled, and I don’t know what more you have to say to me.”

“Just see our Conon!” cried the voice of young Olorus, who had heard the last words. “The insatiable fellow never stops. Always at-

tentive to beauty, ever paying homage to blooming charms."

Then advancing nearer to Conon he said in a lower tone, though Acontius could still hear :

"Remember Cydippe!"

"Pshaw!" replied Conon.

"Are you so sure of your cause?"

"Perfectly sure."

"I heard the contrary."

"You have been deceived, wilfully deceived; for only malicious design can so foolishly attempt to misrepresent a fact known to the whole city. The archon Charidemus has given me his formal consent before witnesses, and if you live until winter I shall hope to see the would-be-wise Olorus among the guests at my marriage feast."

Olorus shrugged his shoulders.

"Charidemus and his daughter Cydippe, my friend — are two different people. Besides, Charidemus won't be exactly edified if his future son-in-law makes an appointment with a flower-girl in the public street."

"Did I?"

“Something very like it.”

“Pshaw !”

This second pshaw expressed the conviction that anything was allowable in the brilliant Colon, even if it would excite censure when practised by ordinary mortals. Yet he accompanied the pale-faced youth, who drew him slowly away.

Acontius had stood close by them. Not a word of the whispered conversation had escaped his ear. “Remember Cydippe !” The words sounded mysteriously prophetic. What strange type of maiden was this daughter of Charidemus, whose will weighed so heavily in the scale ? He had learned from Melanippus, the priest of Aphrodite, that the archon was a stern man of unyielding strength of will. Only a very unusual girl could assert her own opinions against such a father. That she would do this, nay that she was by no means so greatly flattered and delighted by the brilliant Conon’s suit as the vain aristocrat supposed, Acontius thought he detected in Olorus’ words. Without understanding himself how it happened, this Cydippe, whom

he only knew by name, aroused his secret sympathy and, with the artist's vivid imagination, he pictured the royally noble figure, her gentle, yet imperious glance, her bewitching smile, whose memory was enough to render even the arrogant Conon yielding despite his outward show of defiance.

Wholly absorbed by this thought, he did not hear Neaira call his name. With hasty steps he walked towards the city; the motley throng in the Street of the Harbor did not rouse him from his dreamy reverie. The work of art he had so long planned once more occupied his mind: the "Shepherdess Returning Home," whose prototype he was seeking, and he felt eager to collect his thoughts and in his own quiet room reflect upon the manifold impressions obtained during his walk.

He reached Coronis' house an hour after noon, and after curtly answering her minute questions went to his studio, where the huge marble block stared at him silently and sadly, as though reproaching the artist for the fruitlessness of these

first efforts. Spite of all the philosophical sayings he repeated to himself, Acontius felt thoroughly out of humor. So he went into the little garden attached to the house, where Coronis cultivated some vegetables and fruit. It was a patch of ground sixty or eighty ells square, surrounded on three sides by walls, but on the fourth separated by a natural hedge of myrtle from a similar piece of land adjoining. Figs, almonds, and pomegranates occupied the rear. In the long bed opposite to the myrtle hedge grew a row of gnarled Cydonian apple-trees, whose downy fruit Coronis boiled and used as sauce for her favorite dish, barley porridge. In the centre of the garden was a small mound, where a clay statue had formerly stood. The ground around the pedestal, except a narrow, winding foot-path, was now overgrown with weeds, but Coronis with the help of an obliging neighbor had transformed this pedestal into a sort of bench, whose back was adorned with some faultily written lines lauding the joys of meditation and rest.

Here Acontius paused and glanced through the bushes into the neighboring garden, where a very old man, with a long white beard, was cutting off big bunches of purple grapes which he placed on a woven straw mat lying by his side. A shaggy wolf-dog crouched beside him, its intelligent head resting on its fore-paws. Sometimes it sniffed the air and uttered a low growl.

“Hush, Cheimon!” the old man would say, raising his sickle threateningly, and the dog then shut its eyes and lay quietly and peacefully — a living illustration of good Coronis’ distich.

Acontius folded his arms across his breast and became absorbed in gazing at this idyl. The sunny garden, the venerable yet vigorous gardener, the strong, docile animal, and the profound stillness reigning over the whole scene, made a pleasant impression upon him after the manifold and confused sights in the Street of the Harbor.

Suddenly the dog sprang up with a short, joyous bark. A girl in a rose-colored robe was advancing from the direction of the house, and Cheimon dashed forward to meet her.

"Neaira!" said Acontius to himself. Then, as she greeted and caressed the animal, which leaped up barking and wagging its tail, he mentally added: "my 'Shepherdess Returning Home.' By all the gods, I don't understand how I could have failed to see how perfectly her face, figure, and character suit my ideal! What a pity that she isn't one of the models who wait in the circle, but is so coy and so peculiar."

The old gardener had now laid the sickle beside the grapes and, holding out his hand to the young girl, said kindly:

"Welcome. Did you have a good run of business?"

"Excellent," replied Neaira. "Look here!"

She drew from her girdle a small leather pouch, slipped off the cord, and gave the old man a peep inside.

"Gold!" he said, staring; "that's what I call a fine profit. Your artistic skill is now paid for in a way that almost makes me anxious."

"Anxious? Why?"

"Why, with all due honor to our little

Neaira's taste and sense of color — your garlands are not worth so much. This Persian King is for your pretty little face, and if the young aristocrats of Miletus show their admiration for you so plainly”

“Nonsense, Laogoras!” interrupted the young girl, laughing. “I understand what you mean well enough; but pray Do you suppose I would trample underfoot the whole happiness of my life for the sake of a few years filled with excitement and splendor? I must answer you frankly for once, because all the time I have clearly perceived to what end your hints were directed.”

“So much the better,” replied Laogoras.

The wolf-dog, which until now had been pressing its huge head against Neaira's knee, suddenly barked again. A broad-shouldered young man entered the garden, a shy, clumsy fellow, with a strangely gloomy face which only brightened at the sight of Neaira. He wore the dark-brown robe of the lower class of the people.

“May I come?” he asked doubtfully.

"How are you, Baios," said Laogoras. "I think you know you are always welcome," and he approached, cordially extending his hand.

Neaira offered hers less readily, almost reluctantly.

"What brings you, the most tireless of workmen, here at this hour?" asked the old gardener.

"An unexpected bit of good-fortune," replied Baios. "Just think" — he turned with a watchful face to Neaira — "half an hour ago the distinguished archon, Charidemus, drove past my forge with his daughter, Cydippe. He was going to the harbor, where the two gold-bedizened city triremes are lying. Business — it is said — will take him over to Samos in a few days. Thirty paces from my shop the pole of his chariot broke. The horses, frightened by the sight of an African lion which was being conveyed to the harbor in an iron cage, shied and caused the accident — to my profit, for I instantly ran up, stopped the horses, which were still trembling and snorting, and offered to repair the damage at once. A pole of suitable size was at hand; the screws and

pins were soon loosened, for I handled the huge pincers like Hephaestus. In short, in little more time than I have been telling the story, the new pole — shabby of course compared with the broken one, but serviceable — was fastened to the chariot, and the drive to the harbor could be continued. Before giving the sign to his charioteer, Charidemus handed me three heavy Persian gold coins. Just think: three — for that trifling job! A capital addition to my savings! What do you think, Neaira?"

"You may well be satisfied with the day's earnings," replied the young girl coldly. "May Charidemus often pass you under similar circumstances."

"Aye, if the gods will grant my prayers."

Then, turning to the old man, he added: "You won't be vexed with me, Laogoras, for interrupting you? I could not deny myself the pleasure, I could not help telling you what had so unexpectedly befallen me."

Laogoras waved his hand kindly, and picking up by the four corners the mat on which lay the

bunches of grapes, nodded pleasantly and turned towards the house.

“ Chat with Neaira,” he said smiling. “ I want to take an hour’s nap. At eighty years, even the lightest toil is hard and wearisome.”

Neaira bit her lips and seemed inclined to retire to her little room at once, but the beseeching gaze with which Baios deprecated this intention aroused her compassion. So she remained.

“ How vigorous he is still !” stammered Baios, looking after the retreating figure.

“ He has been temperate and industrious all his life,” replied Neaira significantly.

“ Industrious — don’t I work, too ?”

“ But you love wine.”

Baios hung his head sorrowfully.

“ Only since I have known Neaira,” he answered thoughtfully.

“ Very flattering to Neaira. But Laogoras seems to be your superior in strength of character ; my acquaintance has exercised no such disastrous influence upon *him*.”

"He and I?" sighed the young man. "He might be your grandfather."

"What of that?"

"Oh, Neaira, of course you understand — but you pretend to be deaf. If, like your host, Lao-goras, I could at least care for you, greet you when you return home, aid you when troubles assail you"

"I have none," replied Neaira, curtly.

"How old are you, sweet Neaira?" asked Baios, after a pause.

"Sixteen — you know my age."

"Sixteen! And Eros has not yet touched your heart?"

"No. But if he should, how would it concern you? Must I confess the secrets of my soul to you?"

Baios looked around, and seeing that he was alone with Neaira — he did not think of old Coronis' garden on the other side of the myrtle hedge — suddenly seized her hand with startling passion.

"Must I explain word for word what you

might guess?" he said almost violently. "It is you and your cruelty I seek to drown in wine. Yes, laugh on. I am mad with love for you and if, after what I have said, you will give me no hope, I'll go to the cliff of the Dioscuri and throw myself into the waves. Then you can know that the smith Baios perished for your sake."

Neaira laughed.

"Are you in such a hurry to take the leap?" she asked mischievously.

Baios gazed at her with a look of fervent love, and answered gloomily: "I can't live without you, Neaira."

"Well then, live with me," replied the girl, laughing. "Who prevents you? If you'll promise to be less tiresome and stop your everlasting sighing, we can be friends, real friends. Your devotion touches me, though I must frankly confess"

"Oh, you have a kind heart, Neaira!" Baios interrupted, in a voice trembling with such uncontrolled passion that Neaira was startled.

"Go!" she said, pouting her rosy lips. "You spoil this lovely day for me by your strange out-

bursts. To speak plainly: I don't love you—not at all; not if you threatened to take the leap from the cliff of the Dioscuri ten times over. Drop my hand, Baios! I don't like such violent caresses. Baios! What do you mean? Go! I command you!"

During the last few seconds the smith had grasped her round arm in his rough fingers with a gesture of mingled rage and irresistible yearning. Neaira now wrenched herself free, and waved her hand like a person ordering an impudent beggar away from the threshold. Cheimon, the wolf-dog, which, since its master's departure had been crouching in the shade of a pomegranate-tree, sprang up growling and measured the over-impetuous lover with hostile glances.

"Forgive me, Neaira!" stammered Baios, hanging his head.

"Go! I won't allow it. If you ever again dare . . ."

"Never, never! I swear it by all the gods! Only say that you are not angry."

"Very well, I am not angry. Only go home."

"Farewell!" sighed the smith, and casting one last yearning glance at the graceful figure, he walked away.

"Come, Cheimon!" said the girl, calling the wolf-hound. "You won't let any harm befall your Neaira, will you? Just wait, you honest fellow, you shall be rewarded."

The dog, looking up at Neaira, wagged its tail, and Acontius, who now left his nook behind the bushes on the little mound and approached the myrtle hedge, was again reminded of his shepherdess. The knowledge that the young girl lived so near had made a strange impression upon him. Neighbors ought to be good friends. This seemed specially obvious to him here, for it appeared almost like a dispensation of the gods that he should be thus brought into the immediate vicinity of the only person — except Melanippus — whom he knew in Miletus.

He was just going to call the girl by name, when Neaira uttered his in a tone of the liveliest

astonishment. She had perceived the youth's slender figure behind the myrtles and started, a deep flush crimsoning her face.

"Are you lodging in Coronis' house?" she asked, approaching the hedge.

"And you are my neighbor?" replied Acontius, smiling.

"I live here with Laogoras, who cares for and watches me as if I were a child. This is certainly a strange chance. But from what direction did you come? I was looking towards the house."

"I have been sitting on yonder little mound, watching you."

The girl blushed again.

"You have no reason to be confused," said Acontius. "No Spartan could behave with more reserve and propriety. The young man seems to be a perfect slave to his love."

Neaira looked up at him.

"You say that as though it were incomprehensible to you. Of course Neaira has long known that she is not pretty."

"On the contrary, you are charming."

"We won't discuss that. Besides — what important idea did you have in mind to-day? I spoke to you at Creon's statue — but you had neither eyes nor ears."

"I was out of humor," said Acontius.

"Out of humor? In beautiful Miletus? Under the fairest of skies? Amid the many-colored costumes in the Street of the Harbor?"

"Yes, Neaira. I did not find what I wanted."

He now related his ill-success at the circle and told her how heavy his heart was because, merely on account of the lack of a suitable model, he could not set to work energetically upon the statue which stood before his mind as if completed.

Neaira grew thoughtful.

"So the cold, aristocratic beauties the artists use for statues of the gods don't suit you?" she asked slowly. "Well, how must the girl who would please you look?"

"Like you," cried Acontius.

Neaira's face now flushed crimson.

"Like me?" she faltered. "Why, there are thousands of them."

"Not ten!" returned Acontius; "and those ten are hard to find and still harder to get."

"And what must such a girl do when you want to chisel her?"

"Nothing. Keep still in the position I give her."

A pause followed.

"Listen, Acontius!" said Neaira. "If it is no harder, I could probably do that to please you. You said I would suit you."

"What? Would you?"

"Of course, if I can be of service to you."

"And what will you ask for it? You know I am not rich, Neaira."

"Oh, you wound me Acontius! I don't take pay for friendly services."

Her eyes again sparkled with the look Acontius had instantly noticed the day before, the expression of the thought: with this friendly service I will fetter you, for I wish you, too, to care for me and never forget the aid Neaira rendered. He

hesitated a moment; but the artist's longing to give his work the utmost perfection outweighed this secret reluctance.

"Well, Neaira," he said kindly, "I will accept your favor with many thanks. At what hour will you visit me first?"

"Whenever you please, at once. Coronis is asleep now, like Laogoras: they need not know yet what we have agreed."

"Then come over. You can bring the wolf-hound, too."

"In a moment," said Neaira.

She walked along the hedge until she reached a spot where the bushes could be easily pushed apart, and then slipped through: Cheimon, with a low bark, followed.

CHAPTER III.

D A W N I N G F A M E.

THE young artist now spent several weeks in eager, tireless labor. As he had merely to execute, not design nor shape—for the work of art stood complete in every detail before his mental vision—the progress made was remarkably rapid. Except a slight change in the lips, which were to wear a more artless and childlike expression than Neaira's, Acontius could reproduce the young girl's countenance line by line; her figure was exactly what he desired. Full, yet delicate and youthful, this "Shepherdess Returning Home," with her robe caught up and the upper portion of her body only half-draped, was a wonderfully charming, almost idyllic figure, and the powerful wolf-dog Cheimon, almost as valuable a model in his way as Neaira, afforded a most effective contrast to the fair young girl.

To the non-critical spectator Neaira's resem-

blance to the young sculptor's statue was very slight; the change in the mouth, apparently so trifling, gave the marble countenance a totally different expression, especially as Neaira's face constantly varied with the alternations of her mood.

Even Coronis, from whom the affair could not long be concealed, thought that the model was not recognizable.

Neaira was sincerely glad. She set a high value on her reputation and, though she would have made any sacrifice for her neighbor, thought it better that none was needed. She would thus escape the suspicion of having been paid for posing as a model; for no one would have believed that a flower-girl and a flute-player had done it from mere good-will. But, on the other hand, it vexed her to think that Acontius either had not considered her face worthy of being copied without alteration, or, if he had made the attempt, had succeeded so imperfectly. The latter supposition seemed to her to betray a sad lack of interest. She herself—she fancied—could have carved Acontius' features from memory, line by line, had

she been familiar with the plastic art. But, spite of numerous hints from Neaira, Acontius had said nothing on this subject.

The young girl now watched with feverish impatience the destiny of the group. Lingering in the kitchen with Coronis, she listened breathlessly to the praises bestowed upon the work by Melanippus in cordial, though measured words. Whatever the priest said in favor of the admirable execution seemed far too little to the excited girl. In her opinion, he ought to have acknowledged that Acontius was the foremost of Greek artists, that never, within the memory of man, had any piece of sculpture been created worthy of bearing the most distant comparison to the "Shepherdess Returning Home." It was partly genuine enthusiasm for art that filled her soul, she would have admired the statue had it been the work of Baios, the smith, or the haughty aristocrat, Conon. But her complete absorption in *one* idea, to such an extent that she almost forgot her own pursuits in her anxiety about the fate of the piece of sculpture, had a deeper root—it was due to her

ardent love for Acontius. The youth had won her heart at their first meeting in front of Conon's villa, and the very secrecy and silence in which this passion had developed caused it to obtain a more complete mastery over Neaira's thoughts and life. While watching him as, flushed with the eagerness of creative toil, he wielded hammer and chisel, a storm of emotion, of which Acontius had no suspicion, was stirring her inmost soul. She would fain have fallen on her knees before him and cried :

“ Kill me, if only you will once press your lips fervently on mine, they long for a loving caress.”

Acontius was too much absorbed in his work and the rosy dreams of the future, associated with the success of this first creation, to heed her strange, excited manner. He believed her vivacity to be genuine friendship, and felt a brotherly affection for the charming girl whose society had become a necessity to him, but he thought of her with the utmost calmness and had far too much respect for her to make the slightest attempt at trifling.

Early in the month Poseidon, that is, at the time of the winter solstice, Acontius publicly exhibited in the hall of the market-place specially devoted to this purpose, his "Shepherdess Returning Home."

During the first few days after, the youth shut himself up in his workshop with an anxious heart. He had instructed a slave, offered to him by Melanippus, to give the necessary information to spectators and name the price of the statue to would-be purchasers. He could not have borne to hear his first work praised or censured ; though he had no personal acquaintance with any of the hundreds who visited the hall, he would have fancied that every one must read in his face the fact that he was the creator of this group, whose whole mode of treatment—no one could doubt—was entirely unlike the old manner. But, did this difference mean progress or retrogression ? This was the question Acontius, in the silence of his studio, now asked himself, and answered with hourly decreasing confidence.

While thus awaiting, in feverish restlessness, a

message from Melanippus' slave, Neaira with a throbbing heart lingered near the statue, listening to the comments of the assembled spectators. Scorching glances flashed from her eyes if any bold fellow presumed to criticise the shepherdess. On the whole, however, she had reason to be satisfied with what she heard. Public opinion pronounced more and more decidedly in favor of the work, and when, at twilight, Neaira returned to Acontius she could assure him that he had passed the first trial successfully.

“Once let the fame of your work reach the people,” she said flatteringly, “and the rich aristocrats will vie with each other to buy it. I saw two or three to-day, apparently members of the Senate, who spoke to Melanippus' slave and seemingly were not disinclined . . . Even that insolent Conon, who is always secretly following me, though he shows more caution of late from fear of Cydippe, whom he wants to marry . . . Even Conon was among the visitors, with Olorus, and praised your work, of course not knowing that you were its creator. Otherwise, I believe he

would have thought everything about it wretched, horrible, contemptible."

So she prattled on, and in a short time put the faint-hearted sculptor in the happiest mood.

"You are a lovable child, Neaira," he said kindly, and taking her little round face between his hands gazed laughingly into her long-lashed eyes. "The best and truest friend I could desire! Come! I must kiss you by way of thanks."

He lightly pressed her pouting lips. Neaira trembled and, rushing swiftly from the room, threw herself, sobbing aloud, into the arms of grey-haired Coronis, who was just crossing the court-yard.

"What ails you, child?" asked the old woman. "What a pale, bloodless creature! And you are shivering and trembling like an aspen leaf."

"What do you fancy?" replied Neaira, calming herself. "I am only overjoyed because our Acontius' 'Shepherdess' is so much admired and praised! Oh, my happiness is beyond description! One who loves art and is herself an artist, as I am, desires nothing more ardently than the

victory of real genius over the malice of enemies."

Acontius had come to the door and, shaking his head, watched her as without farther leave-taking, she hurried towards the entrance. He was accustomed to all sorts of eccentricities from the girl: but this one affected him incomprehensibly.

The sun had long since set, and beyond the gulf, behind the Latmian heights, the calm disk of the full moon rose clear and bright, shedding a more and more brilliant light over the city and harbor. Acontius was too excited to read by lamp-light as usual the *Odyssey*, whose undulating rhythm seemed to breathe into his soul the artistic standard for his daily toil. So, throwing his himation over his shoulders, he went out, but this time, avoiding his favorite walk towards the Street of the Harbor, sought the western quay, where the road led between dense groves to the oracle of Apollo Didymus.

He stood for sometime at the top of the shore-road, gazing out at the calm, moonlit sea. The

night was unusually mild for the season of the year; not a ripple broke the broad, mirror-like surface of the waves. Like a shape of mist, woven from blue and silver, the island of Hyetussa lay on the verge of the western horizon. The spot was very lonely, for the inmates of the few houses that extended to the western shore, sought their couches soon after night-fall. No one passed Acontius except a pair of lovers, then all was lifeless.

The young sculptor clasped his hands in mute devotion; his throbbing heart swelled with speechless rapture, and he raised his eyes to the starry sky as though seeking there an infinite something for which there is no name.

Lost in dreamy reverie, he stood long in this attitude.

“Aphrodite,” he said at last in a low tone, “loftiest, fairest of all the goddesses, I thank thee! My joyful heart now hopes that I may some day be permitted to represent thee and thy ambrosial charms; for I feel that my first faltering effort has obtained thy favor! This shepherdess was

created in thy image, imperfect, simple, and transitory, yet still a symbol of thy glory ! Oh, do not abandon me in future. Grant me the success that fills the soul with bliss !”

He raised his hands towards heaven with passionate fervor, so completely absorbed by the ecstasy of this heartfelt prayer that he did not hear the sound of approaching footsteps advancing from a neighboring hut. A long shadow on the road first attracted his attention, and glancing aside he saw the clumsy figure of Baios, who had stopped a few yards off and stood staring at him in motionless silence.

Acontius felt disagreeably surprised, the reserved, sullen fellow was by no means attractive to him, and doubly unpleasant in the solemn exaltation of his present mood. Yet he addressed the customary greeting to the new-comer, and then asked in an almost embarrassed tone, what brought the smith to the western shore at so late an hour.

“I might put that question to *you*,” retorted Baios. “Are you waiting here for *her*? Perhaps

you want to seek some secret nook in yonder pine-wood for your stolen caresses."

Baios had clenched both hands as he spoke, and his voice thrilled with the mockery of despair.

Acontius instantly understood him, for Neaira had spoken more than once of the smith's troublesome courtship, and the passionate ardor with which the young fellow's eyes rested on the pretty flute-player had not escaped his own notice. Besides, he instantly realized that Baios, from *his* point of view, could not help being furiously enraged if he compared Neaira's friendliness to him, Acontius, with the repellent scorn bestowed upon the love-sick suitor. Nay, even when the smith had implored the pretty flute-player to become his wife, Neaira's sole reply was a mocking laugh.

Spite of this clear understanding of the situation, Acontius thought it desirable to feign astonishment, especially as he was really surprised to find that Baios regarded him as a lover rather than a favored friend. Yet, during his whole intercourse with Neaira, Acontius had never over-

stepped the limits of courtesy; the kiss pressed upon her lips that evening, in the ecstacy of his triumph as an artist, had been an unprecedented event. Jealousy must have clouded Baios' eyes.

"I don't understand you," said the sculptor.

"Hypocrite!" cried Baios, grinding his teeth, as he advanced a step nearer. "That's just what sets my brain on fire — you pretend to be cold and quiet outwardly, and yet secretly lure her with your smiling face! Will you deny that she is madly in love with you? Before you came to the old go-between's accursed hut, Neaira now and then gave me a friendly word; I hoped in the course of time to conquer her coyness. But now! — all kindly feeling seems swept away; she jeers and mocks at me, yet throws herself into your arms, while you, of course . . . Ah! you best know the bliss of her kisses."

"So that is what you mean?" replied Acon-tius.

"Yes, that's just it," said the other, advancing still nearer. "I entered Coronis' garden from Laogoras' grounds and stole into the court-yard,

for I was determined to have some certainty. . . . Now I know. My heart stood still. . . . Even yet, Acontius, I can't understand why I did not rush out and strike you both to the earth!"

During the last few moments Acontius had felt an emotion akin to compassion. But now Baios, in his excitement, was going too far.

"You seem to have a very good opinion of me," he answered smiling. "Two performers are needed for such satyr-like sport, one who strikes and one who allows himself to be beaten. I have never discovered any talent for playing this second part."

The scornful tone in which these words were uttered inflamed the wrath of the enraged Baios to the highest pitch.

"And I tell you," he shouted, stretching his arm aloft as if he were swinging a hammer, "you *will* play the part sooner or later, if you don't instantly swear by Zeus, the avenger of perjury, to leave Neaira, forbid her to come to your workshop, and never speak to her again."

"You are out of your senses," replied Acon-

tius. " Go home, Baios, and sleep off your drunken fit; for you must be drunk to make such an absurd demand."

" I insist upon it. Swear — or . . ."

" Well, or ?" asked Acontius, frowning.

" Why," whispered the smith, glancing furtively to the right and left, " this spot is lonely enough and the shore is close by . . . If you refuse, I'll strangle you and hurl you down into the sea. Then it will be said that the handsome Acontius got drunk, wandered off, and fell from the quay . . ."

A slight pallor blanched Acontius' face.

" Your jests are somewhat coarse," he answered icily.

" Will you swear now ?" asked Baios, pressing close upon the young sculptor. " Or . . . I'll prove that my threat was bitter earnest !"

With these words, he grasped him by the chest.

" Let me go !" said Acontius in an expressionless tone.

" Swear !" the smith repeated.

The blood surged to the young sculptor's head. His brain whirled, his eyes flashed fire. The next instant he seized his enemy's burly form in both arms, raised him from the ground, and hurled him with irresistible force upon the stones of the quay.

"There!" he cried, panting from the violent exertion. "Now try to touch my robe again! It is only pity and contempt for your wrath that makes me refrain from giving you up to the law."

Baios, swearing frightfully, rose again. He was limping, and besides, his opponent's vigor and resolution had considerably quenched his ardor for battle.

"Just wait a little," he called after the sculptor, as the latter walked quietly away. "If I hadn't slipped, you would now be gasping in the grasp of these fists, like a wolf seized by the hounds. Wait, Acontius, and beware. I'll be more on my guard the next time."

Acontius made no reply and returned home in a very angry mood.

As he crossed the court-yard with a small clay

lamp in his hand, he saw a large garland, woven of laurel branches and gracefully twined with acanthus and myrtle, hanging over the door of his work-room.

“ Neaira !” he said to himself. “ Was that frenzied Baios right ? Pshaw ! Jealousy sees everything in the light of its own fancies. Neaira is my friend, a kind neighbor, but she has no thought of love. I doubt whether her gay, careless nature is capable ”

He went to rest, and slept until far into the next morning.

Two hours before noon old Coronis entered his studio. She had heard something new about the ever increasing success of the ‘ Shepherdess.’ One of the richest youths in Miletus, named Olorus, had told the slave who did the bargaining with the purchasers, that he might safely ask three or four times as much, for he, Olorus, would agree to pay double the original price if the group was not sold by evening. She chatted on for an hour and a half, and the youth, who had usually grudged even fifteen minutes, listened

with a smile. Until the fate of his "Shepherdess Returning Home" was decided, he could not collect his thoughts, far less continue his work.

Towards noon, just as he was preparing to go to Melanippus, from whom he expected to get more definite and accurate information concerning the public opinion of the work on exhibition, Neaira, trembling with excitement, entered the court-yard.

"Acontius," she said with feigned composure, "your fortune is made. Guess who has bought the 'Shepherdess'!"

"The names of the Milesian art-patrons are almost unknown to me," replied Acontius breathlessly.

"Then I'll tell you! The first citizen in Miletus, the head of the magistracy, the distinguished archon, Charidemus, visited the hall with his daughter, Cydippe, and uttered the fateful words: 'This 'Shepherdess' is the work of a master.' Then, turning to Melanippus' slave, he asked the price of the group. When the sum was named, the archon shrugged his shoulders, saying:

‘Charidemus cannot pay that, it would be an insult to the city he governs. I will offer you ten times as much.’ The slave bowed. ‘The work is yours, my lord.’ Then there was fresh marvelling, admiring, and praising, till my heart fairly jumped for joy. Finally, as the distinguished purchaser turned to go, he said to the slave: ‘Tell Acontius how much his work pleases me, and that I wish him to call at my house to-day to receive its price and the assurance of my esteem.’

“When I heard that I could wait no longer, but hurried off as fast as I could to bring you the news; my only fear was that you might have left the house. What measureless good-fortune, dear Acontius. Just think! Charidemus, who sets the fashion in all matters of art. The richest of the Milesians! If Melanippus’ friendship has aided you so far that your first work was expected and your name known to the little circle of art-connoisseurs, the archon’s patronage will raise you to the summit of fame and bring your statues into such demand that you will be more renowned than any other artist of your time.”

“Dear child,” replied Acontius, “no patron in the world can bestow upon my works what they do not in themselves possess. Yet I thank you for your touching zeal and your joyful tidings. You say that the archon’s daughter was also present. Did my ‘Shepherdess’ find favor with Cydippe, too?”

Neaira looked at him in surprise. “Do you know her?” she asked slowly.

“Melanippus has often spoken of her, and—to know nothing of Charidemus’ daughter, a man must lead a life even more secluded than mine. Miletus is full of the praises of her grace and beauty.”

“People exaggerate,” replied Neaira. “True, she is beautiful, but her eyes are so cold and proud . . . you would not be pleased with her, Acontius.”

“Yet, I am curious. . . .”

A strange expression of anger hovered around the young girl’s lips. Her eyes flashed; the whole expression of her face—which had hitherto,

in her intercourse with Acontius, been all smiles and acquiescence — seemed transformed.

“Well,” she answered bitterly, “perhaps, when you go to Charidemus to-day for your gold, you may be lucky enough to catch a ray from this sun. Pray Aphrodite to guide the fair Cydippe’s steps from the women’s apartment to the archon’s business-rooms.”

“That would be delightful,” replied Acontius, “for I really feel ashamed of not having caught a glimpse of the most famous beauty in Miletus. And I call myself an artist! But what is the matter, Neaira? By all the gods, I believe you are vexed because I speak of Cydippe’s beauty, when I have the charming original of my ‘Shepherdess’ before my eyes. Oh, how vain you girls are!”

He tried to give the matter a jesting tone, for Neaira’s almost malign glance had alarmed him far more than the brutality of the love-sick Baios.

“I vain?” replied Neaira, laughing with ill-suppressed wrath. “Of what, pray? This face, which Acontius deemed unworthy to give to his

‘Shepherdess?’ Do you suppose I don’t know, as well as you, that I bear no resemblance to your admired work? No, Acontius, you mistake me . . . If you had had a better model it would never have entered your head. . . . I’m only vexed because you men instantly lose your wits at the sight of a doll, who is really not a bit better than the rest of us. Whether the lines of the nose and brow curve a whit more in this direction or that can’t satisfy your whole souls; but you act as if the salvation of the world depended upon it.”

At that moment Melanippus’ slave entered and repeated — somewhat more sedately — the news Neaira had already brought.

“Go at once!” said Neaira, when the man had retired. “I can see that your heart is glowing with impatience, and I would swear that Cydippe’s foolish waxen face has more to do with your excitement than your success or the chinking gold.”

“Listen, Neaira,” said Acontius in a half-jesting tone, yet as though the remark was seriously meant, “marry Baios, the smith. He deserves a lasting punishment, for he insulted me and, as you

look now, I think he would be fittingly chastised if you wielded the sceptre in his house."

"For shame, Acontius!" cried Neaira, bursting into tears.

"Can't you understand a joke? Come, give me your hand, Neaira! Don't be angry! I'll promise to gaze only at the shining gold and not look at Cydippe's face at all if, contrary to my expectation, she should come in my way."

Neaira heard no more. Unable to control her displeasure, the poor girl hurried away, dealing the wolf-hound, that came bounding to meet her, a furious blow with her clenched hand, and even answering grey-haired Laogoras rudely, to the intense astonishment of the old man, who until now had always believed the blooming girl the very embodiment of cheerfulness.

"A strange mishap," thought Acontius. "Yesterday Baios — to-day she! I probably failed to adopt the right tone; but that comes from being embarrassed. The matter can't go on so. I almost blush for myself, when I am forced to admit that Baios may have been right in his conjecture.

Yes, yes, it is so! How in the world could I be so blind! And I don't love her! Ah, no, no, the feeling must be very different when we really love."

He put on his best robe and took his way to the archon's splendid mansion. The door-keeper, whom Charidemus had informed of the artist's expected arrival, courteously placed him under the guidance of one of the magnificently-dressed slaves who stood waiting in the court-yard of the *andronitis*. Acontius was fairly dazzled by the noble, stately luxury of this superb court-yard. The house, majestic as it appeared to the spectator from the market-place, afforded no idea of the vast size, perfect symmetry, and exquisite beauty of its interior. Lofty Ionic columns of wondrously graceful proportions supported an airy corridor, adorned with all the treasures of sculpture and painting, which extended along the doors of the sitting-rooms, and directly in the centre of this colonnade was the archon's large office, also a masterpiece of imposing architecture, splendidly ornamented and elaborately furnished.

A boy had already announced the young sculptor. Crossing the threshold of the apartment, Acontius saw on his right, near a draped side-door, the grave, aristocratic face of the man whom he had seen enter the market-place from the propylæum on the first day of his residence in Miletus.

Charidemus was leaning back upon the purple leather cushions of a bronze chair. His feet were lightly crossed over each other and, supporting his head on his right hand, he allowed his gaze to dwell with a calm, searching expression upon the new-comer ere with a gesture of haughty condescension he offered a welcome.

By his side, leaning against the pillars of the door, stood the arrogant rake whose acquaintance Acontius had made on the highway, Conon, the richest young man in Miletus, whom public report unanimously named as the archon's future son-in-law. In fact, Conon, spite of his dissolute past career, which weighed heavily against him in the eyes of the more strait-laced portion of the community, possessed an unusual degree of Charide-

mus' interest. The latter liked the proud, impious nature of the young man, who was really more familiar with the business of the city and its government than would have been expected from his long preference for noisy symposia and similar pleasures. Of late the relations between them had grown closer. The younger man, without holding any office, gradually relieved the archon of some of the duties of his position which it was possible for a deputy to perform; for he knew that this readiness to render service was the surest way to the heart of the ambitious, but somewhat ease-loving magistrate.

Spite of his usual self-control, Conon started slightly as Acontius entered. Little as he commonly feared gossip, it was unpleasant to have a sort of relation established between the man whose daughter he was wooing, and the artist who was now revealed as the vagrant stranger of the Euromian Way. Resentment against his former foe heightened this feeling, and he cast a threatening glance at the sculptor, which said: "I know you well!" Then he followed Chari-

demus' example and gave him a cold, formal greeting.

Acontius heeded neither menace nor greeting. Another picture had long since riveted his beauty-loving eyes, a vision so fascinating, so bewitching, that even his reverence for the distinguished chief of the city government could not keep the young artist's rapture within due bounds.

At his left, a few paces farther back, stood a young girl who, from all that Acontius had hitherto heard, must be Cydippe, the fairest daughter of Miletus. The Ionian sleeved-robe, drawn in graceful drapery over the girdle, flowed in milk-white folds around her marvellous figure. Over her breast and back hung the picturesque clinging diploidion, a sort of pelerine which seemed to veil and yet displayed the grace of a faultless form. Her thick, fair hair was gathered in a careless knot at the back of her head, but over the crown it was interwoven crosswise with dark-blue ribbons. The face was divine, every line perfect, without the uniformity and lifelessness of perfection, uniting the most faultless beauty with

the greatest feminine charm, statuesque loveliness with vivacity, majesty with sweetness and winsomeness.

Acontius stood motionless for a few moments before this wonderful embodiment of the divine ideal of which he had so long dreamed. If Aphrodite had ever descended from the heights of Olympus to walk among men, dispensing happiness and fortune with her sunny smiles, the goddess dwelt in the ambrosial form of this superb maiden.

Yet it was not only the *artist* who was instantly carried away by the spell of Cydippe's indescribable beauty—the *man*, the ardent youth, felt, for the first time in his life, the omnipotence of resistless Eros. His heart ached, ached with an indescribable pain, and yet this anguish thrilled him with delight, he would not have exchanged it for all the treasures of earth. During the few moments that elapsed between his first rapturous glance at Cydippe and the instant when he finally calmed himself to listen to Charidemus' words, Acontius thought he had experi-

enced more than in all the long, dull years of the past.

What Charidemus said was well meant, yet sounded somewhat harsh amid the beatific ecstacy of first love. The patronizing kindness, praises, and encouraging approval expressed by the archon, rudely aroused the young sculptor to a consciousness of the distance between him and the illustrious position of Charidemus. In a moment so well suited to shatter the barrier between the lofty and the lowly and assert the one unspeakable justification that fills the heart and the world, this sudden rebuff fairly crushed the youth, and he listened to the archon's gracious words with a humble, almost contrite air, as if they contained a rebuke.

"When you have created or are engaged upon any new work, let me know of it," Charidemus continued. "I should like to place your next statue,—if the subject is suitable—in my daughter Cydippe's apartments, before it has been seen and admired by everybody, like your charming 'Shepherdess.'"

Cydippe now joined in the conversation for the first time, and at the sound of her voice a thrill of ecstasy ran through the youth's frame.

"Create a work a young girl can enjoy — not too grave and gloomy," she said kindly. "You artists, after having succeeded in making something charming, so often pass to a bold and powerful subject; the hand that yesterday fashioned a Hebe will begin to-morrow a raging Centaur."

"You shall be satisfied," replied Acontius, pressing his right hand upon his heart.

"That is settled, and now go to the treasurer," said Charidemus, with a courteous but unequivocal gesture of dismissal.

Acontius, almost forgetting to say farewell, withdrew. He received the gold quite indifferently and spent the remainder of the day in his workshop, absorbed in reverie.

CHAPTER IV.

LOVE'S EXTREMES.

FROM this day Acontius seemed fairly transformed. His calmness and self-reliance appeared to be irretrievably lost. During the morning he tried to work, but — spite of the graceful model he had fortunately obtained in the person of an Ephesian girl who had lately come to Miletus — the Charis he had commenced for Cydippe made slow progress. Neaira, who would have been by no means ill-suited to the artist's new creation, having heard from Acontius for whom the statue was intended, had bluntly refused to continue her friendly service, so he found himself compelled to seek the circle in the Street of the Harbor where, after searching a long time in vain, he saw the Ephesian.

During the afternoon, though at that time the light was most favorable, he could not stay at home, but wandered through the side-streets

near the market-place, crossing and re-crossing the square before the archon's residence, in the hope of seeing the silk-curtained litter in which Cydippe was borne to the public-gardens, or down to the sea-shore. When the splendidly-decorated phoreion, with its eight Egyptian bearers, appeared in the palace vestibule, Acontius managed to pass close by Charidemus' daughter, and though this could be done unnoticed — for, wherever the beautiful Cydippe appeared, the people flocked around her litter from all directions — his heart throbbed anxiously, for he thought if Cydippe saw him she might consider this secret approach presumptuous. He feared, yet longed to have her notice him. If it was impossible to possess her, she should at least learn that he was being consumed by the quenchless ardor of his love, that he lived and breathed for her alone. It was not only her exalted position and boundless wealth that made him faint-hearted, but the surpassing radiance of her beauty. He would have had as much courage to woo the golden Aphrodite herself as Cydippe.

During the first three weeks after their meeting he had circled around the beautiful girl's litter in this way three or four times. He had followed her to the leafy avenues of the city Paradise and seen her quit her litter beneath the evergreen oaks and olives, and stroll slowly along by her companion's side; but he only ventured to gaze at the image of his beloved goddess from a distance.

Once his heart contracted with unspeakable jealousy. It chanced that Conon, whom he had entirely forgotten, came up as though by accident, and joined the two ladies. For the first time Acontius remembered the situation of affairs, the words Conon had exchanged with Olorus amid the throng in the Street of the Harbor came back to his mind. How confidently the haughty Milesian had spoken! And now—how arrogant he appeared, as though he already possessed lawful rights which permitted him to adopt a certain degree of familiarity towards Charidemus' daughter.

From behind the gnarled trunk of an ancient olive-tree, Acontius watched Cydippe's features

as she passed him at her suitor's side, while her companion, from delicacy or modesty, lingered a few paces behind. The beautiful face betrayed neither pleasure nor annoyance. The firmly-closed lips expressed quiet indifference and perfect calmness; the sculptor even thought he perceived a sarcastic smile hovering around the corners of her mouth. No, no betrothed bride would walk beside her lover with that bearing. Conon must have been mistaken about the celerity of his success. Olorus' fear had doubtless been fulfilled and Cydippe had learned that, spite of Conon's formal courtship, he had not ceased to play the part of conqueror among the daughters of Miletus.

The young sculptor now realized for the first time how completely he had lost his heart to the lovely Cydippe. The thought of another's possessing her pierced him like a poisoned dagger, and he felt that he should never be able to overcome it.

Again several weeks passed. Spring came, and with the deeper green of the winter vegeta-

tion mingled the brighter hues of the young leaves, budding plants, and grasses, that spread their flower-interwoven carpet over hill and dale.

The Charis Acontius was carving had gradually advanced towards completion, and with its progress the artist became calmer and less restless, though while at work he indulged in the strangest, most daring dreams; his ardent yearning for happiness increased with his passion. The immortal Aphrodite had repeatedly appeared to him in his dreams, upbraided him for his timidity and weakness, and inspired his soul with courage. Her last appearance, especially, had been strikingly real.

“Why do you hang your head in dull renunciation, Acontius?” she had said. “Before my throne neither wealth, external splendor, illustrious birth, nor sovereign power are regarded, naught save beauty, youthful ardor—and the sacrificial flames of loving, faithful hearts. Bend over the mirror of the brook, as Narcissus did of yore, or take the polished metal and behold yourself! Have I endowed you with a more niggardly

hand than the lean-visaged Conon? Did I not give you a frank, manly, noble face, and sparkling eyes that ought to know how to hurl the firebrand of love? Dare something, Acontius! Be bold, yet crafty! Conquer her heart, and you will have gained all."

Such dreams, continued in waking hours, lent fresh energy to the young artist, who had threatened to succumb to cowardice.

It was towards noon. Acontius, after a short rest, had again seized his tools and, in the absence of his model, who had left him that day in the lurch, was working upon a subordinate portion of the pedestal of the statue, when Coronis rushed breathlessly into the room, and in broken words announced the approach of distinguished visitors.

Directly after, Charidemus and his daughter, Cydippe, crossed the court-yard, while the slaves who attended them remained near the entrance.

"As Acontius sent no message," Charidemus began, "I had no other resource than to come in person to ascertain the state of affairs. By all the gods, your workshop is not exactly a place to

inspire confidence. Who would suppose, Cydippe, that so bold and vigorous a work of art as the admirable 'Shepherdess' could have proceeded from this little angular den?"

Standing close against the wall, he scanned the nearly-completed Charis with a long, searching gaze.

"You are making progress, young master!" he said at last; "and by Zeus, that means something; for your first work was inimitable in its way. This Charis—what enchanting grace, what purity in the lines! And how exquisitely you treat the hair! Here on the temple, to be sure—ah, it still lacks the final touches. Admirable, my young friend, thoroughly admirable! What do you say, Cydippe?"

"I shall consider myself fortunate to possess this work of art," replied the young girl, glancing at the motionless Acontius. Their eyes met and, though the aristocratic maiden considered herself perfectly justified in numbering the obscure youth among those at whom she might gaze without reserve because they did not belong to her own

sphere of life, nature, in this instance, triumphed over conventionality. Cydippe blushed, and feeling this, flushed still deeper. In fact, she could not deny that this Acontius would have been a worthy scion of an ancient race, a member of one of the chosen families who decided the fate of the city. Yet the fleeting emotion annoyed her, especially as she perceived the impression her blush had made upon Acontius, and did not wish the youth to imagine, even for an instant, that he was capable of embarrassing her. She was vexed with herself; but this very anger often led her thoughts back, during the next few hours, to Acontius and the memory of the scene in his studio.

When Charidemus and Cydippe had left the young sculptor, Acontius found himself in a condition of excitement that made labor impossible. The single glance exchanged with Cydippe had so stirred the vague, obscure emotions of hope within, that from this moment he was firmly resolved to put forth every effort to win the desired end.

His first thought now was Melanippus, the priest of Aphrodite.

This distinguished man had long since noticed the strange transformation in the youth's character, and even now and then betrayed by a passing remark that he perceived its cause. Acontius perfectly understood that the priest made these allusions to induce him to reveal his secret, and though Melanippus had far too much delicacy to ask the youth for a confidence he did not voluntarily bestow, yet his fatherly affection for the young sculptor led him to regret his reserve, believing with reason that he was called upon, before many others, to aid lovers with counsel and action. Was he not the priest of the immortal goddess, who did not desire the misery of loving hearts, but the fulfilment of every secret yearning ?

Acontius unceremoniously dismissed the fair Ephesian, who now arrived, far behind the appointed hour, hastily threw on his himation, and hurried off to Melanippus, whom he found engaged in conversation with several of the temple-

servants. The great spring-festival of the goddess was close at hand, and there were many things to be discussed and decided, not only those pertaining to the religious rites, but business matters of all kinds; for, at the festival of Aphrodite, strangers from the surrounding isles and neighboring coasts flocked to Miletus, and according to the ancient custom the city and its representatives were bound to show them hospitality. At the meetings held to discuss these matters, the priest of Aphrodite presided.

Acontius waited in tremulous impatience until Melanippus' subordinates had retired. Then Clitiphon ushered him into the room, where Melanippus received him with a covert smile, which Acontius instantly interpreted. It told him that the priest read the cause of his visit in his face, and had foreseen his coming.

"My son," he began, perceiving that the youth could go no farther than an embarrassed murmur, "I thank you for having regarded me as a friend and father. Nothing affords a man of mature years so much pleasure, as to be able

to smooth the path of a youth and lead him carefully where he himself once stumbled or fell. Do you wish to confess your secret to me, Acontius ? You do—that renders the avowal unnecessary. You love Cydippe, Charidemus' daughter."

Acontius grasped the hand of his honored friend and kissed it. He could not utter a single word.

"Yes, my son," Melanippus continued, "I have known your secret for weeks. From the door of my house and the peristyle of the temple I have watched you gliding about the archon's house, like a hunter who is tracking noble game. I saw you follow the litter—and as you approached it, noticed the ardent flush of Aphrodite on your face. Then I vowed by the immortal goddess to aid you, that your life might not be joyless like mine, for I plainly perceived that what moved you so powerfully was true, real, imperishable love, which makes us profoundly wretched or unutterably happy."

He paused, and an expression of deep thought clouded his face, then he continued :

“ Oh, my son, what joy your love for Cydippe has given me, how it doubles my interest in your fate ! Know, Acontius—I may confess it to you in this hour, for a deep, true love matures the youth to a man—know, my son, that Cydippe is the living image of her dead mother Thoosa, and this Thoosa was the light of my life. I came, a poor youth, from Attica to Miletus. At the Spring festival of Aphrodite I saw Thoosa in the temple, and my heart kindled with passionate love. She returned my affection, and in the sanctuary of the goddess we vowed to belong to each other,—we looked forward to the future as unsuspiciously as two happy children. But Thoosa’s father, Creon, the stern and haughty archon, laughed at the beggar’s suit and forced the timid Thoosa to wed Charidemus, afterwards his successor. Thoosa wanted to kill herself, nothing but her love for her mother, who had vainly taken our part, prevented her proceeding to extremities. A year after her marriage she gave her husband a daughter and died. This daughter is the fair-haired Cydippe.”

“Your story awakens strange emotions,” said Acontius, after a long pause. “If Cydippe, as you tell me, is the image of her dead mother, what must you, my dear patron, have suffered at her loss!—And now, following closely upon my grief for your fate, comes the selfish feeling that Zeus will forgive in one sick with longing, and I tell myself that the more keenly you have suffered for Thoosa’s sake, the more you will be disposed to aid me, to the full extent of your power, in the battle for Cydippe.”

“Even so,” replied the priest of Aphrodite, “I consider it a special sign from the gods that I am chosen to help you, and, as it were, make amends for the sin committed by a malicious fate against omnipotent Eros. From what I know of Cydippe—true, it is principally by report—there is a prospect that the conflict for her hand will be more successful than the one waged for her mother, supposing, of course, that Cydippe loves you. While Thoosa was all gentleness and patient, silent submission, Cydippe has some of the imperiousness of her father and grandfather—just

enough to make her resolute and determined, without impairing her feminine charm. The only really important point, therefore, in the whole plan of the campaign, is to gain her heart. An aristocrat by education, and accustomed from childhood to wealth and splendor, she may have long noticed the young sculptor with secret approval, without having had the most distant idea of the possibility of a marriage. But this secret approval is sufficient for the first step, and of its existence, oh, enviable Acontius, I have the most trustworthy signs."

"My friend! my father! How unutterably happy you make me! So it was no delusion that took possession of me, when Charidemus entered my workshop with the object of my adoration? Oh, speak!"

"It is a very simple matter and requires no long narrative. Clitiphon has rendered Cydippe's confidential attendant various little services, and learned the secret from her lips. The quiet devotion with which you have followed the young girl's footsteps, the treacherous ardor of your

glances, your unmistakable yearning, amid so much timidity and reserve—all these things at first attracted Cydippe's attention, then aroused her interest, and as, spite of the girlish modesty which distinguishes you, you have the figure of a youthful Ares, it is no wonder that her thoughtful eye prefers to dwell upon you rather than the dissolute Conon, who for months has vainly sought her hand!

“Now I hear that she has visited your workshop. This confirms Clitiphon's report, but also verifies my supposition that at present she only comprehends the matter—if I may so express it—theoretically. She came to see young Acontius face to face, as we climb a hill to enjoy a view of the sea. The play of sunlight on the waves is bewitching; the play of chaste, tender emotions, in the lines of a face glowing with ardor, is still more entrancing. She is flattered by your embarrassment, and the thought of being admired by a handsome youth, who is also a creative artist, affords her unspeakable pleasure. Her reflections as yet go no farther; but the threshold that

divides such a mood from real love is extremely narrow, and it will rest with you to make the crossing swift and sure."

"What can I do?" faltered Acontius in the rapture of his joy.

"What I will tell you, when the hour has come. Meantime, pray to Aphrodite for the success of the plan I have been several weeks arranging for you. My idea is a bold and novel one, and many, who judge things only by their outward seeming, might say—if it were known that *I* was the originator—that it was unworthy of a priest of Aphrodite. Yes, I confess, Acontius, the maiden is to be *outwitted*—yet she will thank us with all her heart, for the harmless snare we cast over the fair one's head will afford her a support in her opposition to her father's will. So, strictly speaking, I shall act *for*, not *against* her.—It is only to escape the misinterpretation of this foolish world that I desire to keep my part secret: before the goddess whose worship I lead my soul is pure; for, from the most ancient times, every expedient which does not trespass upon the

rights of others has been considered allowable in love. The goddess wills that two hearts destined for each other shall be united, and where her priest seeks to promote this highest earthly happiness, he honors the imperishable omnipotence of her laws."

"And you cannot tell me now what I so ardently long to know?"

"I still have to consider the details. Learn patience, my son! All you can know to-day is this: the great spring festival of the immortal Aphrodite will, I hope, also be the spring festival of your happy love. In the temple where I once saw Thoosa, Cydippe will betroth herself to you, if the vows offered to golden Aphrodite are still sacred and inviolable. Meantime, strive to rise higher in Cydippe's favor and win her father's regard, so that, when Aphrodite herself speaks in your behalf, he will allow his opposition to be conquered."

"What can you intend?" murmured Acontius, deeply moved. "Well! I will wait patiently

until you summon me, till you speak the word which is to explain your enigma."

The two men embraced each other and Acontius left the house with an overflowing heart. Melanippus stretched himself upon his couch, as though exhausted, and supported his head on his hand.

"This shall be my vengeance, Charidemus," he said in a whispered soliloquy; "and I think you will admit that it is a noble one. In sooth, Melanippus, who is now undertaking to give you a gifted young artist for a son-in-law, might by the power of the influence the goddess bestows upon him—if the emotions of those first months of torture still lingered in his heart—have ruined Cydippe, humbled her forever as the wife of a miserable rake. He might have had Conon appointed the next archon and had the union of your future successor with Cydippe, in spite of her aversion, proclaimed by the Gerusia as a political necessity. Yet, no! Thoosa's daughter must be happy! For her sake I will forgive the sordid schemes by which you conquered."

While the priest was thus absorbed in his own thoughts, Acontius hurried towards the western suburb. He longed for the solitude of his own room; the noise of the streets and the brilliant-hued robes of the surging throng oppressed him. His fate had been changed too suddenly; the transition from hopeless resignation to the most joyous confidence had occurred too abruptly not to render a few hours reflection necessary.

Completely absorbed in his happy dreams, he pushed aside the curtain at the door of his workshop and, entering, flung his mantle on a chair and then glanced absently at the almost completed statue of his Charis, when a low sob startled him.

He turned.

Cowering in the farthest corner of the room behind a table, her arms clasped around her knees and her face bowed upon them, he saw Neaira.

“You here?” asked Acontius in astonishment.

She raised her tear-drenched face and answered with a calmness that boded evil. “Yes,

it is I, Acontius. For months I visited this workshop, and you thanked me for doing so: is it now so great a breach of décorum, if I availed myself of your absence to once more recall those happy days? I know all is over."

"Are you weeping, Neaira?"

"Why should I not weep?" she continued in the same tone, though it became more and more evident how entirely this humble composure was feigned. "Weeping relieves my tortured heart, and does not disturb you. Or have I wailed aloud and torn my garments?"

"Will you not rise?" asked the bewildered sculptor. "You are rubbing your beautiful sky-blue robe against the lime"

"Spare your solicitude," she vehemently interrupted. "You trample me in the dust like withered grass, and now prate about lime like an old woman! What do I care for these wretched rags? But I want to tell you to your face, for the last time, that I won't submit to your perfidy."

She had started up and now confronted him with flashing eyes.

“ My perfidy ?” he repeated slowly.

“ Yes. Oh, you may stare and feign ignorance, but your guilty conscience pales your face. Deny, if you can, that from the first you flattered me, made me believe . . . Bah, why do I talk on ? It is a waste of words !”

“ *What* have I made you believe ?” asked Acontius gravely.

“ That you loved me ! That you were seeking me for your wife !”

“ You are raving. When did I ever . . . ”

“ Silence !” she angrily interrupted. “ ‘When did I ever’ . . . That is just it ! Had you treated me like all the rest of them ; Conon, who offered me jewels, Olorus, who snatched kisses by force, I should have known that to Acontius also I was the wretched plaything you men consider girls of my profession. But when your manner was respectful, yet tender, when you looked at me as though you wanted to draw the very soul out of my breast, yet never violated the strictest rules of propriety, how could I help believing it was real love that filled your heart ! And so it was,

by all the gods, until that treacherous sorceress stole you from me. Confess it, Acontius! At least have the honest courage to tell me the truth."

"You are mistaken, Neaira! Ah, if you only knew what grief your words cause me, if you could suspect . . . Listen to reason, Neaira, I can't bear to see you weep — it cuts me to the heart."

"So you do love me still!" she passionately exclaimed, a fresh torrent of tears coursing over her face. "Yes, you love me; but you love that other still more ardently. And therefore I must languish in despair, while you will never attain what your infatuation promises!" Acontius! Hear what I have to tell you . . ."

"Another time, Neaira. You are too much excited to know what you are so recklessly revealing."

"I know exactly what I want to say. You must choose between two things: my never-dying love and my quenchless hate. I will be either your promised wife, or your foe till death. Ah, and I swear that I shall be even truer as your foe

than as your wife — true to my wrath and my revenge. Do you hear, Acontius?"

Her angry tone produced a sobering effect.

" You choose an unfortunate means of arousing love," replied the sculptor: " threats."

" Yes, I threaten, because I see that all kindness and tenderness are wasted here. You have acted like a robber, a dishonorable thief — and now you mock me."

" I do not mock you, but I will not allow you to insult me. I take your excitement into account, or I should be compelled. . . ."

" To do what?" asked Neaira, turning pale. " Speak without reserve."

" Or I should be compelled to beg the once gentle Neaira to quit this room and never return to it again."

" Oh, you will be safe from that, my precious lad," she cried with a scornful laugh. " Neaira doesn't throw herself away so. But I can tell you one thing; with all the arts of love and all the favor of the great and powerful men who patronize you, you will never, so long as I live, enjoy the

possession of the maiden you love, even though Charidemus should commit the folly of giving his daughter to the vagabond son of a wheelwright."

With these words she rushed across the threshold.

"Incredible!" said Acontius, looking after her. "Now I understand what affected me so strangely at that first meeting. This Neaira is a fiend. I would so gladly have remained her faithful friend, but, after all that has passed, I shall be wise to keep out of her way as far as possible.

CHAPTER V.

THE FESTIVAL OF APHRODITE.

THE first decade of the month Elaphebolion had commenced, and the city of Miletus was swarming with its annual throng of strangers, who, partly from religious motives, partly from the pleasure they took in the splendor of the manifold ceremonies and the gay, mirthful bustle of the occasion, had flocked thither from far and near, giving the market-place and Street of the Harbor a totally different aspect. Matronly women, who desired to implore the goddess' favor for a beloved daughter; rosy girls, who attributed greater potency to their own prayers, — because they would be more fervent and impassioned, — than to their parents' petitions; handsome youths who did not come to pray, but to enjoy; hetaerae from Andros and Cyprus, decked with golden jewels; besides a multitude of pleasure-seeking men of the most varied conditions in life — all met in brilliant

Miletus. Even barbarians from Scythia, black-eyed Persians with flowing trousers and tall tiaras, Egyptians draped in cloaks, and merchants from Campania and Bruttium, were seen among the visitors.

During the first day of the festival, which was filled with all sorts of preparatory ceremonies and solemn processions, but also with luxurious, flower-scented symposia, Acontius, by the priest's directions, mingled in the throng at will; for this first day bore no share in Melanippus' plans, and the more Acontius dispelled the secret impatience that consumed him by mingling in the motley throng crowding the streets and squares, the better for him. He should keep himself vigorous — so thought the priest — for it was possible that the decisive moment might make heavy demands upon the youth's coolness and determination.

On the second day, the sacred rite was performed in the temple which, opening the real festival of the goddess, was also peculiar to the city of Miletus. The three fairest and most aristocratic maidens who entered their seventeenth

year in the month Elaphebolion were, on this day, consecrated, as it were, to be the mediators between the goddess and the people.

From the third hour after sunrise until towards noon they were obliged to remain alone in the sanctuary, apart from all other worshippers, to prepare for the solemn sacrifice which, when the sun reached its zenith, they were to offer, in the form of two snow-white doves, to the immortal goddess.

These doves were not slain, as usual, but set at liberty between the central pillars in front of the temple; and, from the manner and direction of their flight, the people learned whether Aphrodite would continue her gracious protection to the city and defend them from hostile invasion, famine and pestilence, flood and fire, as she had hitherto done, or whether some unknown peril was hidden in the future. As the archon annually had these doves reared on the island of Hyetussa, the birds, after fluttering to and fro a short time, invariably went in the direction of their home, that is westward; which was considered by the people an omen of

good-fortune, because the sea, from whose foam, according to the Hellenic myth, the goddess was supposed to have risen, lay towards the west.

Among the three chosen maidens, whose duty it was to perform the ancient rite at this festival, the fairest and most aristocratic was Cydippe. Upon this fact the priest of Aphrodite had founded his bold plan, without considering whether the hours of preparation spent by the young girls in the sanctuary could be used for the furtherance of his design, without offending the dignity of the goddess. A more beautiful sacrifice—he said to himself—was never offered to the foam-born divinity by her priest, than the aid rendered faithful love in the conflict against foolish and ruinous prejudices.

On this momentous day Acontius remained at home. The priest of Aphrodite was to send him a message. The youth, clad in festal garments, paced restlessly to and fro between the court-yard and the garden. Coronis, whom he had informed that he was expecting a slave from Melanippus upon some very important business,

did not stir from the stone bench beside the entrance. Acontius also came there every five minutes, betraying such unusual excitement, that the widow shook her head anxiously.

"You hope to hear glad tidings," she said, "but I warn you. Whoever rushes to meet happiness too impetuously will find the gods place unexpected obstacles in his path. Keep calm, Acontius. A steady eye sees the mark more clearly than one half-dimmed by the roseate haze with which tremulous yearning surrounds every object. We all have our experiences and, though you do not reveal your secret to me, I can see through you. Only Eros arouses such storms"

The youth did not hear Coronis' wise admonition. Ere she finished speaking, he had hurried away and again began to roam about the garden; this time, by way of variety, taking the path to the top of the little mound from which, on the first day of his arrival, he had looked over into old Laogoras' patch of ground.

The memory of the impetuous girl, who had

once treated him with so much gentleness and kindness and then changed so suddenly, now, for the first time in weeks, weighed heavily, with a vague foreboding of evil, upon his heart.

During all this time he had not seen Neaira. At first Coronis had expressed her surprise at the flute-player's absence, but afterwards she probably suspected the connection of affairs and, perceiving that Acontius avoided the subject, asked him no more questions. The sculptor, more and more engrossed by the one thought which the priest had fanned into a flame, found no time to trouble himself about the probable fate of the young girl. Once he had asked Laogoras for tidings of her, but merely learned that she had left her former lodgings. Where she had gone, what was the cause of her sudden departure, were points on which the old man could give no information. One thing was certain, Neaira no longer visited the Street of the Harbor — to the great joy of her avaricious rivals.

“Laogoras grieves for Neaira,” Acontius said to himself. “How pretty and sweet she was

when she greeted the old man the first day of my arrival. I deeply regret that, though innocently, I am the cause of this grief — for I cannot doubt Neaira left Laogoras' house to avoid me and my vicinity. May the goddess, to whom I consecrate my grateful heart, forgive me if, in my intercourse with Neaira, I have behaved foolishly or thoughtlessly. But I did not suspect, and no one can command himself: You shall love here, and remain unmoved there."

Spite of this self-defence, a feeling of secret reproach still burdened his soul, and the mood seemed to him, now that he had so decisive a step in view, no omen of success. A sudden fit of cowardice stole over him, a presentiment that, in the conflict for Cydippe, he would have to endure a long and torturing atonement for the sin he had unintentionally committed against the unhappy Neaira.

His landlady's voice interrupted this sorrowful train of thought.

"The messenger from Melanippus!"

Trembling with joy he rushed to the court-yard, where Clitiphon was waiting for him.

"My master invites you to the festal banquet given to-day," said the man, "and will expect you in the domatio.n at the fourth hour after noon."

This had been the message agreed upon between Acontius and Melanippus. The youth now knew that he must repair to the temple without delay.

"I will be punctual," he replied. "Please give my thanks to your master and accept, in return for your many services, this trifling gift for yourself."

He gave the slave a gold coin, which Clitiphon eagerly accepted, and departed.

A few minutes after, Acontius said to Coronis: "I now have the message for which I waited with so much longing. Many matters of great importance and value to me will be decided at this banquet. If you are kindly disposed towards Acontius, pray to the gods that everything may result as I desire. Meantime, I will wander

through the market and Street of the Harbor as I did yesterday. I cannot endure the loneliness of the house longer than is necessary. Farewell, good Coronis."

With these words he left the house and by a circuitous way reached the temple, where a low door with copper bosses led into the subterranean portion. Here there was a windowless room of moderate size, dimly lighted by a chimney-like opening. A three-armed chandelier on the wall cast a ruddy light upon the bronze tables and some chairs and benches. At one of these tables sat Melanippus, holding in his hand a round object wrapped in a white cloth.

"Were you seen entering?" asked the priest, as the youth approached.

"I think not. The narrow path behind the temple is little used, and I chose a suitable time."

"Did you fasten the door again?"

"With both bolts."

"Very well. Now do not forget what you are to say if the matter, as I joyfully hope, should be publicly discussed in the presence of the

people. After giving you the harmless instrument of our stratagem, I shall go up to the vestibule. You have slipped in — do you thoroughly understand — slipped in without my knowledge; if the matter fails, I will pay the fine imposed upon the curious by the state. But emphasize the point; that it was the omnipotent will of the immortal goddess herself that you obeyed."

He rose and took the muffled object from the table. The snowy woollen cloth revealed a large yellow apple.

As Acontius was evidently amazed that an apple should be the instrument of so important a plan, Melanippus continued:

"The instrument I offer is simple, but if everything results as I desire, it will prove more effective than you suppose. The plan, too, is as simple as the instrument. That is why I deemed it needless to give you a previous explanation; the few words I now have to say will suffice. As you know, the three maidens have been in the sanctuary an hour and a half. Their devotional exercises are now over, and they will rest for a

short time. As I just noticed, Cydippe occupies the golden chair at the right of the entrance, while her two companions have taken the purple and silver ones at the left. Let it now be known to you that, according to ancient custom, every vow and oath sworn in the temple of Aphrodite is to be inviolably kept, or misfortune will come to the faithless one's family and, unless atonement is instantly made, on the city and its whole population. Therefore all Miletus jealously guards the sacredness of such vows. Well then: our object is to lure from your Cydippe in the secos of the goddess, the vow that she will become your wife. This vow, according to all human foresight, will be made if you open the side door of the sanctuary and carefully roll this apple to the feet of the beloved maiden. I will now wrap it in the cloth again, that you may be more certain of your throw. The fruit is so smooth that, without the cloth, it might roll too far, and it is Cydippe, and not either of her companions, who must lift the apple from the floor. Open the door so gently that no noise can be heard, toss the fruit

in, and remain perfectly quiet. I think you will hear something that will fill your heart with joy."

Acontius gazed at the priest of Aphrodite somewhat timidly. But the pleasant smile, which beamed upon the doubter, assured him of Melanippus' confident belief in his words.

The priest withdrew and Acontius, taking the apple in his hand, went up the stairs. From the accurate description of the temple Melanippus had formerly given him, he was sufficiently acquainted with the position of the side-door, but even without this he could not possibly have missed it, for the subdued voices of the young girls, who were now talking together in the interval between their devotions, showed him the direction he was to take.

The small door moved noiselessly. Acontius' heart beat high as he glanced into the sanctuary. His eye instantly rested upon the beautiful profile of Cydippe, whose head was turned slightly aside, and through the chink between the edge of the door and the jamb, he also caught a glimpse of the two other girls. There was no difficulty

in carrying out the priest's directions. He availed himself of the moment that Cydippe's face was still more averted and, carefully calculating the distance, flung the apple directly at her feet, where it lay, half unwrapped from its covering by the fall.

"Where did that come from?" said Cydippe, stooping.

"That is the question I was going to ask you," replied one of her companions.

"Did you see nothing?" Cydippe continued, taking the queer ball from the floor. "An apple! How strange! Has it any connection with the mysteries of the Foam-born? And here — what does this mean? No, it's incomprehensible."

"What is it?" asked her two companions.

Cydippe's face had suddenly flamed with blushes.

"There is an inscription on the apple"

"An inscription?"

"By all the immortals, I don't understand it. Iole, didn't you see who threw the apple in?"

"No, no!" replied her friend. "But read it.

Perhaps the inscription will give the clue to the enigma."

"On the contrary, it deepens it. Let us say no more about it."

She tried to hide the apple in her robe.

"What," cried Iole. "Do you want to conceal a secret from us, your companions, in Aphrodite's sanctuary? And who tells you the apple was meant for you? Do you think it was the son of Priam, who handed the token of his admiration to the fairest? Come, sweet Cydippe! Don't tease us! You see we are almost dying with curiosity."

The allusion to the judgment of Paris produced its effect; for there was nothing that Cydippe more eagerly avoided than the semblance of vanity.

"You are mistaken, Iole," she said with another blush. "It was only because I thought the matter too unimportant. But, if you wish, I will read it. There are only a few words, and they are foolish enough."

She drew out the apple and read :

“I, Cydippe, the daughter of Charidemus, swear by the immortal Aphrodite, that Acontius, the sculptor from Mylasa, shall be my husband.”

She tried to smile, but did not succeed in doing so with her usual aristocratic calmness. She doubtless suspected that this incident was something more than mere idle sport, though she could not have guessed the design of the writer of the inscription.

“What have you done, Cydippe?” cried Iole. “Don’t you see that the inscription you have read is a trap? My father told me that something similar once occurred in the temple of Diana at Delos, and that the oath was kept. You have sworn, Cydippe, for whatever passes your lips in connection with an invocation to the goddess, while you are in the sanctuary, is inviolable.”

“Iole! What are you saying?” asked Cydippe, rising from the chair.

“The truth! You have sworn, Cydippe.”

At this moment the side-door opened and, with his mantle falling in ample folds around his

shoulders, Acontius, who had listened to all this with a joyous heart, stood with a glowing face among the maidens.

“ You have sworn, Cydippe !” he solemnly repeated. “ If the goddess, dispensing rewards and punishments, still rules over the lives of mortals, you are mine or your faithlessness will bring misfortune on us all.”

“ What do I hear ? A man’s voice in the circle of the chosen virgins ?” was now heard from the huge central door, and Melanippus, with the priestly fillet around his grey hair, calmly entered, his bearing full of grave dignity. Here in the sanctuary Melanippus was acting as the interpreter of the great multitude of the people, who understood the service of the goddess in their own way—and, according to their view, Acontius’ act was reprehensible. “ But”—so said his mute glance—“ as soon as my official dignity is laid aside and appearances are separated from realities, I shall again be what I have always been, the true servant of the divine Aphrodite, who heeds the form very little in comparison with the substance,

and values a single kindly deed more than all the pomp of these ceremonies."

Melanippus now turned to Iole and asked for information about what had occurred.

The young girl told the story.

The priest seemed to be reflecting for a time, then he addressed Acontius.

"You have gained your purpose. Cydippe cannot, dare not break her vow. Even her father, the illustrious archon, will not venture to thus insult the goddess and the devout people of Miletus. But the consequences of your triumph, lightly as you may regard them in comparison to what you have won, you must accept with all humility; for the law is sacred as well as the goddess' will. Go now, Acontius! I was well-disposed towards you, so I will consider what can be done to avert the wrath of the senate. I regard no offence so pardonable as that which can plead in excuse a passionate love, and that you do love Cydippe, that it is the maiden you seek and not the daughter of our most influential citizen and the heiress of so many millions, is proved to

me by the purity of your nature, which I have learned to value, and by the timid shyness which still marks the victor."

"Indeed it is so!" cried Acontius, pressing his right hand upon his heart. "I would love you, Cydippe, and you only, though you were the most insignificant of the slave-women. I desire neither your father's treasures nor the lustre of your name! I want nothing save yourself, your divinely sweet face and the heart that must love me, if the goddess is gracious to me."

These words, uttered in accents glowing with the most ardent passion, did not fail to produce their natural effect, which was still farther heightened by the peculiarity of the whole situation. In short, the secret, half-unconscious fancy which Cydippe had felt for the handsome youth suddenly burst into a bright blaze, and the more her haughty, aristocratic companions seemed to pity her fate, the more the soul of the noble-hearted girl was stirred by an eager spirit of contradiction, and the firm independence which enables men to cross the barriers of prejudice.

Spite of this sudden and significant change; she remained perfectly silent.

“Come,” said Melanippus, turning to the youth, who was radiant with joy, “you must now leave the temple, that the sacred rite, which is about to commence, may not be disturbed. And you, daughter of Charidemus, do not, I beg, let your thoughts dwell either with favor or wrath upon what has happened here, but devoutly utter your pious prayers and distribute the gifts of spring. Remember, the prosperity of your native city is at stake.”

The young girls gave themselves up for a time to the impression of what they had experienced. Then the temple-servants entered to conduct the virgins to the altar. The maidens, each bearing two snow-white doves in a rush basket, knelt in the sacred place and laid their gifts upon the beautifully decorated slab.

“Aphrodite!” murmured Cydippe’s virgin lips, “Princess of all who breathe, glorious ruler of gods and men, mistress of so many radiant temples from east to west, honored in Paphos as

on the defiant heights of Eryx, in Amathus as here in this wave-washed region,— hear, oh, hear me ! Bless the people and their mighty rulers ! Bless the city and her pious guests ! Bless Miletus !”

“ Bless Miletus !” repeated her companions, and six rounded arms were extended from the maidens’ gleaming robes toward the statue of the immortal goddess.

Now followed a series of symbolical rites, during which the throngs in the sun-lit Agora grew denser and denser, as the people flocked to witness the appearance of the three fairest maidens in Miletus and the flight of the sacred doves.

When the sun had reached its zenith, Melanippus came forth between the central pillars of the peristyle, and announced that the sacrifices to the Immortal One had been offered, the prayers and all other rites prescribed by ancient Milesian custom were ended ; and the maidens were already being conducted from the hall of sacrifice into the vestibule.

He now moved aside. Directly after, floating white robes glimmered at the back of the colonnade and the three virgins, with the folds of their snowy festal garments flowing proudly around them and their beautiful arms bared to the shoulder, took their places in front of the entrance to the temple. The light west wind gently stirred the flowers of the loosely-woven garlands on their fair, bright brows. With the left hand they slightly raised their upper robes till they formed a drapery which concealed the little baskets containing the sacrificial doves that were to be allowed to fly.

At the sight of these youthful figures, so radiant with beauty and grace—living pæans to the omnipotence of the goddess of love—the vast multitude burst into acclamations of boundless delight. Cydippe's two companions blushed; but she did not appear to hear the frenzied homage, which certainly was not offered least to *her*. Grave and motionless, she waited the signal from those experts in interpreting the flight of birds, the oionistæ, who directly after the maidens' ap-

pearance had stationed themselves on their right and left at the corners of the lower story of the temple, in attitudes of solemn pathos.

The signal was given, and the confused roar of voices in the thronged Agora instantly sank to a subdued murmur. Raising the open baskets with both arms, the three virgins said in low tones:

“Favorites of Aphrodite! Return to the purple bosom from whence the goddess rose.”

Gay festal music echoed in alluring cadences. Almost at the same instant all the doves flew out of the little basket, hovered timidly a few minutes over the heads of the throng, and were then flying westward, when a bird of prey which hitherto had been a mere speck, in the azure sky, darted down like a flash of lightning, seized the leader of the six doves in its talons, then after circling twice around the Agora with its bleeding victim, as though in mockery, soared towards the south in the direction of Didymoi.

Cries of indignation, pity, and anxiety rose on all sides — The two grey-bearded oionistæ left

their posts, while Melanippus led the young girls down to the Agora where their relatives awaited them.

Here, too, in the midst of a numerous train of attendants, stood the archon Charidemus, who had quitted his official seat of honor in the portico of his house to get a nearer view of Cydippe, who was the pride of her father's heart. He received the young girl with a strange smile.

"It was *your* dove," he said slowly. No one could have determined whether the words meant reproach or anxiety, or whether Charidemus simply wished to take the matter lightly, in the manner of a man who is superior to the prejudices of the common herd. In fact, Charidemus did not believe too implicitly in the significance of the flight of the doves, but he knew the populace had faith in it. The thought that his Cydippe might be regarded as the source of the misfortune, which the oionistæ would predict from the disaster that had befallen the murdered dove, affected him unpleasantly, so he was wavering between all sorts of contradictory emotions which, like an expe-

rienced man of the world, he strove to veil behind the mask of courteous indifference.

“*My dove?*” replied Cydippe. “I stood here as the representative of the city. If the goddess is angry, Miletus and the illustrious Senate are to blame . . .”

The oldest of the two augurs now appeared between the central columns. His companion stood apart beside the tall, tiara-crowned form of Melanippus.

The tumult died away.

“Milesians!” the oionistes began in a voice that echoed far over the throng, “the future before us is not quite so cloudless as has been the case for a long series of years. The incident you have just witnessed indicates unexpected battles and sore troubles. The way to avert these things is to have every citizen remain loyally where the will of the immortal gods places him, every man do his duty, every one avoid, more carefully than ever, sacrilege, animosity, violence, and the violation of your vows and oaths. No crime must profane the soil of Miletus — then the vulture

that threatens our peace will again pass us by."

"May Aphrodite grant us her favor," echoed from a thousand voices through the ranks of the people.

"Apparent disaster may have a good result," Charidemus said to his daughter. "A fresh spur to virtue would not be too dearly purchased, even at the cost of a few external complications and troubles. Come, Cydippe! The crowd is growing more threatening every moment; my attendants are scarcely able to protect us from the elbows of the poorer citizens and slaves."

In fact, the throng was pressing upon them more and more from every direction, and looks of surprise and enquiry sought the young girl's face, now bowed in conscious embarrassment. Low murmurs became audible amid the confused buzzing of the crowd, remarks which, though enigmas to Charidemus, conveyed to Cydippe distinct allusions to the incident in the secos of the temple of Aphrodite. The news of the bold deed of the sculptor from Mylasa had reached,

as if by magic, every nook and corner of the city and, amid increasing excitement, people were already relating the most contradictory details concerning the decision of the daughter and her illustrious father, while Charidemus had not the slightest suspicion of what had occurred.

CHAPTER VI.

A BOLD STEP.

HALF an hour after these incidents Charidemus was seated in one of the large rooms of the andronitis, waiting for Cydippe, who had gone to lay aside her festal robes and take some refreshment before telling her father what impressions she had received from the sacred rite. Charidemus was evidently out of humor. The slaves standing outside the entrance were whispering together about the fact, with all sorts of gestures which mutely expressed the question: "How will the master take it, when he learns what young Acontius has ventured to do?" Not one of the whole band would have dared to tell the archon the story which had now reached the farthest corner of the suburbs.

Cydippe appeared, but had scarcely crossed the threshold ere the head-slave announced a visitor. It was Conon, who begged to be received

at once and, much as Charidemus regretted having his conversation with Cydippe interrupted, he could not—on account of the impression it would produce on the slaves—refuse admission to his confidant.

Conon entered. His face was very pale, save for a feverish flush directly under the eyes. He saluted his patron more formally than usual, and then strove to address a few cordial words of greeting to the lovely Cydippe—in the tone of a man sure of his position and who is no longer obliged to sin, but merely to offer homage. Yet his voice sounded so strange and unnatural, that Charidemus instantly perceived that the young man was under the influence of some powerful emotion.

“What is the matter?” he asked, leaning back in his chair.

“My lord,” stammered Conon, glancing at Cydippe, “I am unutterably amazed to find you and the daughter of this illustrious house so calm and quiet. Or are you ignorant of what has occurred? Has Cydippe, believing the incident of no importance, failed to mention it to you?”

“Of what are you speaking?”

“Of the insolent Acontius’ crime.”

He turned to Cydippe:

“I see that you have not related the occurrence; but you err in taking the crime so lightly. It will cost much labor and great ingenuity to defy the consequences of this rascally trick; for the people are taking the traitor’s part, and if you go into the market, you will hear how passionately the populace insist upon the inviolability of your supposed oath.”

Charidemus had slowly risen from his seat.

“Are you dreaming?” he answered, frowning.

“When and where could Cydippe have sworn?—And what is the vow?”

“Ascribe to my zeal, my forgetfulness to explain what all Miletus is discussing,” replied Conon. “Listen to the story, and then let us determine without delay what is to be done; for the longer the matter is deferred, the more dangerous will be the increase of popular favor in behalf of the criminal.”

Conon now briefly told the story. Cydippe

listened silently, but Charidemus frequently interrupted the narrator with exclamations of indignation and contempt.

When the tale was ended, Charidemus paced up and down the room several times, then, pausing before Cydippe, asked :

“ Well, my daughter? Did all this happen just as Conon says ? ”

“ Very nearly,” replied Cydippe. “ Rumor has invented some of the details, but the substance of his story is true.”

Charidemus shrugged his shoulders. “ By Zeus, if this fellow’s insolence was not so absurd, so ridiculous, I would be furiously angry. Who ever heard of such a thing ! A workman, scarcely above the rank of a slave, raises his eyes to the daughter of Charidemus ! A vagabond, a lying beggar ! ”

Cydippe had silently fixed her eyes upon the ground but, at this torrent of abuse, she suddenly raised her head. A fiery glance flashed from beneath her long lashes ; her lips moved, but she repressed the impulse of contradiction and listened

almost with satisfaction to what Conon said of Acontius in the same strain. Now that the enemies of the bold youth so recklessly opened the war and trampled all sense of justice under foot, she felt herself doubly magnanimous in yielding to her increasing regard for Acontius. Nay, the prejudices she had hitherto cherished, her belief in the impassable gulf between herself and the young sculptor, her reverence for the ancient family to which she belonged, all this was now forgotten; for—so she thought—a state of affairs which placed a lovable, noble man like Acontius so far below the arrogant and hateful Conon, could not possibly be in harmony with the real will of the gods. So Conon was to learn that there is no worse way of lessening a loved one's affections for a rival, than unjust abuse.

After a pause, Conon continued :

“ You are angry, Charidemus, and certainly with good reason. Yet there is worse to come. I heard it from Olorus—everybody seems to know it. Acontius, in the unfortunate belief that Cydippe is now really bound, will enter your

house this very day, perhaps this very moment: and, with all due formality, ask your daughter to be his wife. 'The archon cannot refuse!' so says common rumor among the people, and Acontius seems to share this opinion."

Charidemus laughed grimly.

"Let him dare!" he said scornfully. "If he crosses this threshold to insult my dignity, he will find his way back in chains. To prison with the infamous wretch who thinks he can outwit the archon of Miletus!"

Conon perceived with eager joy that Charidemus' wrath seemed to increase with every syllable.

"If I may be permitted to give a modest bit of advice," he said smiling, "you will beware of hasty resolutions. The oionistes' verdict is still ringing in the ears of all and, in the present mood of the populace, what is merely the just punishment of a criminal might be interpreted as a breach of faith."

"I defy the people when they pursue the path of folly!" cried Charidemus. "Come, Cy-

dippe. I will show the populace that *I* dispose of my daughter's hand, not blind chance nor the absurd whim of a madman. Conon, I know that you love Cydippe and have long sought to win her favor; I should have left time to bring about your alliance; but I now see myself compelled to assert my paternal rights without consideration: By virtue of these rights I now betroth you to each other, and leave to you, my Conon, the privilege of naming your wedding-day."

Conon's face glowed with delight. Faltering a few words of passionate gratitude, he clasped the archon's hand and raised it to his lips. Then with a strange humility, unusual to him even in his intercourse with Charidemus, he turned toward Cydippe. The girl stood beside the bronze statue, silent and motionless, a miniature copy of the monument in the Street of the Harbor. Her features, whose expression was usually so gentle and winning, for the first time showed a startling resemblance to the rigid, obstinate countenance of her famous ancestor, who seemed to be ever commanding and refusing. But, ere Conon could

accost her, an announcement was made which came upon all present like a thunderbolt: "Acontius, the sculptor from Mylasa, begs an audience with the illustrious archon."

Cydippe's marble-like rigidity seemed to relax on hearing the slave's words; her cheeks glowed, her lips parted, and her bosom heaved as though she were panting for breath. Conon started, his voice failed, and he clenched his hands furiously. Charidemus vainly strove to conquer his emotion — he involuntarily made a gesture, as though he would fain hurl the servant who bore the offensive message across the threshold.

"Shall he be admitted?" asked Conon, as Charidemus gave no order.

"Yes, I wish to see how far the fellow will carry his insolence, and what pretext he can allege to give his crazy farce even a semblance of justice. Bid him enter, Protesilaus!"

Half a moment of excited expectation elapsed ere the audacious Acontius appeared in the doorway.

"I greet you!" he said in a constrained tone.

No one answered.

"I have come," Acontius continued, "to ask the illustrious archon's pardon for a deed commanded by the immortal Eros himself."

He paused abruptly, perceiving for the first time the faces of the two men, now pale with rage, gazing at him like watchful panthers. This hostility on Conon's part did not surprise him, the nervous tension of his features was simply an increase of the malignant expression with which, from the beginning of their acquaintance, he had become familiar. But how complete was the transformation in the archon's calm, aristocratic face! Acontius had been fully prepared to encounter displeasure, even indignation; but for Melanippus' urging persistence he would scarcely have ventured upon the trying expedition to Charidemus' house, for spite of all that had occurred his hopes rested upon a very feeble foundation; yet the fury blazing upon him from Charidemus' piercing eyes far exceeded the utmost limit of his anticipations. Conon, who noticed his confusion, seemed to gloat over his rival's humiliation. The

more uncertain Acontius felt, the greater was the probability that an angry word from Charidemus would suffice to force the youth back to his subordinate position. Acontius must voluntarily declare that he repented his folly, would resign his bold demand—no matter on how flimsy a pretense. This declaration would spare Charidemus the necessity of a refusal, which might provoke and excite the superstitious people—and Conon knew how easily, during the festival of Aphrodite, when so many thousands thronged the streets, any exasperation might give rise to serious revolutions. There had long been a strong party in Miletus more or less openly opposed to the senate, and especially to the person of the archon. Once—on the occasion of choosing an embassy to Athens and Corinth—an open conflict had been imminent. Conon, little as he could compare with Charidemus as a statesman, in this instance possessed a clearer view of the critical nature of the situation, because the archon, in his boundless pride and independence, despised the people and

greatly undervalued the strength of his opponents.

"I have come," the young sculptor added, "if the noble Cydippe desires to keep her vow to the immortal"

"Silence!" interrupted Charidemus, who could no longer control himself. "You have come to continue what you commenced in the goddess' sanctuary. But I am prepared to treat you as you deserve."

He paused a moment. The inexorable expression of his features indicated that the next instant he would issue an order for Acontius' arrest. Outside in the court-yard, the slaves expected that the scene would end in some deed of violence. The inmates of the room listened anxiously, but the summons to the senate-guard did not follow.

Charidemus bethought himself.

He had probably considered that he would somewhat lower his dignity if he took the matter too seriously, for after a pause he adopted a totally different tone. His subdued voice expressed indulgence for the blinded man, the

slightly sarcastic pity of the divinity for the mortal who dares to ask for the hospitality of the gods. The more the archon entered into this fortunate role, the better satisfied he became with himself and the really clever solution of the difficulty his penetration had accomplished. He excused, nay he even defended Acontius. Eros, the All-conqueror, had urged the youth into his downward course. It was easy to understand that a lover, once enthralled by the intoxication of his passion, should not shrink from the boldest deed. Charidemus forgave him; nay, spite of this error, he would retain his warm interest in the young master and not visit upon the artist the sins of the man—if Acontius even now, at the last moment, would think better of his purpose and own that he had done wrong.

The archon's wrath would have roused the youth to opposition and vigorous strife; this sudden calmness, condescension, pity, bewildered and disarmed him. The feeling that he was striving for the impossible grew stronger than ever. The cold, expressionless features of Conon, who care-

fully avoided weakening, through even a contemptuous gesture, the impression produced by Charidemus' words, increased the young artist's timidity. So Conon, too, seemed to regard the matter as a trivial accident which it was scarcely worth while to discuss.

Perhaps Acontius might not have so soon recovered from this feeling; perhaps he might silently have retired to renew the attack later, had not his eyes met Cydippe's. From the instant he crossed the threshold his victory over the young girl's heart had been complete. The noble, youthful figure, so handsome, so vigorous, yet so thoroughly pervaded by the charm of delicate timidity, had appeared to the maiden's loving heart in an entirely new light. Cydippe now perceived that, even amid the superb surroundings of marble columns, luxurious carpets, and gold-broidered hangings, Acontius had an aristocratic bearing, the air of a conqueror. So her last doubt vanished, and the look that now flashed from her eyes upon the youth was the true admiring love, which looks up to the beloved

object, instead of descending from some fancied height.

Acontius understood this glance, and new life thrilled in every vein. He shook off the meshes the archon's crafty eloquence had woven so cunningly about his soul, and said firmly:

"Charidemus misunderstands my purpose. What I dared was not done in the ecstacy of a sudden inspiration, but after due consideration, and with the steadfast resolve to carry out my purpose. In the secos of Aphrodite's temple, Cydippe vowed to become my wife. I now claim her promise. Archon of Miletus, I am your daughter's suitor."

"Fool!" muttered Conon.

Then, turning to Charidemus, he asked: "May I be permitted to answer him?"

"No," replied the archon. "What could you say? Your reasoning will have no more effect than mine and, in sooth, I am reluctant to waste more advice upon a madman. Do you answer him, Cydippe. One syllable from you will per-

haps cure him and thus spare me the necessity of punishment."

"Father," replied the beautiful Cydippe with downcast eyes, "I fear I shall anger you; but you yourself cannot deny it. Vows uttered in Aphrodite's sanctuary are inviolable."

"What does this mean?" asked Charidemus.

"Fidelity to vows," continued Cydippe, "was the burden of the oionistes' warning. It behooves the daughter of Charidemus, above all the other citizens of Miletus, to heed the admonitions, for she herself was, as it were, the prophetess of the approaching misfortune."

Charidemus stared with dilated eyes at the young girl.

"By all the gods, do I understand you aright?"

"Yes, Father! Acontius must be my husband—for so I have sworn. And you, the guardian of the laws, will not wish me to break my oath."

"Do you call this wretched trickery a vow?"

"You are mistaken, Father. Any promise

which escapes our lips coupled with an invocation to the goddess becomes an oath. Had it not been the will of the Immortal One that I should make this vow, why did she suffer me to read aloud what Acontius had written? You know Aphrodite permits her favorites, when animated by genuine love, to employ stratagem, but it does not beseem us to argue with the goddess or interpret her will."

"Unhappy girl," cried Conon in horror, "do you mean to sacrifice yourself?"

"Sacrifice?" repeated Cydippe. "Know, Conon, that where Aphrodite bestows her favor, she grants not only the promised hand, but the heart and soul. I love Acontius."

A long pause followed this statement.

Charidemus and Conon were petrified by this utterly unexpected turn of affairs. Acontius trembled with rapturous joy; the blood throbbed wildly in his temples, and he raised his arms as though yearning to clasp Cydippe to his heart, but he did not utter a word.

"Back!" cried Charidemus' threatening voice

at last. "Shall I have you broken on the wheel like the traitor Ixion? Never again dare to cross the threshold of the house your crime has dishonored. Hence, scoundrel! Though Cydippe had sworn in every temple in the city, I would break what is valueless. Conon, conduct your betrothed bride to the court-yard of the gynœconitis* and there await me! Meantime I will see that we are spared such incidents in future."

"My lord," cried Acontius, turning pale, "I beseech you"

"By the Eumenides, leave me!" cried the archon, fiercely.

"Farewell, Acontius!" said Cydippe's voice, "trust to the favor of Aphrodite!"

Acontius passed out into the court-yard as though bewildered. The looks fixed upon him by the slaves afforded sufficient proof that the scenes in the archon's room had remained no secret. Wavering between anxiety and happiness, he walked through the spacious door-way. Here, too, he met several servants of the household,

* Women's apartment.

who eyed him with strange glances. Crimson with blushes he at last gained the propylæum, which was raised a few steps above the market-place.

“There he is! Acontius! The favorite of the goddess! Envious fellow! Long live Acontius!” were the shouts rising on all sides.

“How furious Conon must be!” cried the rough voice of a broad-shouldered wharf-porter.

“Serve him right. I don’t grudge a humiliation to the despiser of the people,” shouted another, and roars of laughter echoed through the market-place, infecting even those on the outskirts of the crowd who did not know its cause.

Three or four slaves had come out with Acontius. They were instantly surrounded and dragged into the throng; while the young sculptor still stood between the front columns of the propylæum as though he did not understand the cause of this strange excitement among the people.

He was just descending the steps, when a fresh uproar arose. The slaves had reported

Charidemus' rejection of the bold suitor. A murmur, a mutter, and at last a roar ran through the populace, like the rumbling of the sea when a storm is rising.

"Stop!" cried the foremost and boldest of the throng. "Will you yourself help to have the vow broken and the city punished for the crime? Take your bride, Acontius! Don't fly like a coward! The archon must obey when the goddess commands."

Gazing doubtfully and timidly at the crowd, Acontius perceived the pale, clever face of Olorus who nodded encouragingly to him, and saw Olorus talk eagerly to several of the by-standers. The sculptor could not hear the young Milesian's words, but perceived by their effect that he was asking the same thing the voices in the front rank had shouted. Dozens of hands were raised, as if to strengthen the ever increasing roar of the crowd, and the dozens were followed by hundreds. "We swear by Cypris that we will defend justice and faith!" was the oath which Olorus had put in the mouths of the excited people, and

they pressed more and more threateningly towards the hall of the propylæum.

It was not only personal good-will towards Acontius, but a political purpose, which induced young Olorus and his adherents to make these noisy demonstrations. Olorus, who, until recently, had been indifferent to affairs of state, having divided his time between pleasure and scientific studies, had been initiated into the aspirations of the malcontents, who did not approve of the one-sided attitude of the senate, which opposed all innovations, and were striving to effect a change in the principles of government. At the end of a few weeks Olorus had obtained a position in the party suited to his personal distinction and remarkable talents. The principal demand of this party was the increase of the senate by twenty members chosen from the so-called new families, who would favor the cause of progress, and they also desired to make essential changes in the office of archon, which would diminish its power, — since Conon, the archon's future son-in-law, was the prospective possessor of this dignity —

and thus escape what to the timid seemed inevitable tyranny.

Nothing therefore could have been more welcome to the party of the opposition, than the incident in Aphrodite's temple. If Acontius became Charidemus' son-in-law, the ambitious Conon would be forever set aside, while there could be no possible fear of the sculptor's playing Conon's part, because he lacked the first requisite: birth and citizenship in Miletus. To defend the sanctity of this vow and promote Acontius' hopes was therefore a precept of political tactics which the malcontents unreservedly obeyed. Never had the oionistes' augury been so persistently quoted, never had the peril this augury predicted been so vividly depicted as here amid the tumult of the Agora. Tidings of Cydippe's course poured oil upon the flames. So they had an ally in the hostile camp. With a little boldness and skill victory seemed certain.

The uproar in the market-place echoed through the archon's palace, awakening first surprise, then, as he learned the details, indignation.

Leaving Conon with Cydippe he went into the propylæum, the steps of which were already occupied by the throng. Acontius was leaning thoughtfully against one of the front pillars.

At the appearance of the chief magistrate the crowd fell back a little. Acontius alone stood motionless.

“What do you want?” cried the archon, when the noise had partly subsided.

Again hundreds of hands were raised above the swarming mass of heads.

“The fulfilment of the oath Cydippe swore!” shouted a chorus of voices.

Charidemus turned pale.

“Men of Miletus,” he shouted in a resonant voice, “who among you—though he were the most insignificant workman in the suburbs—would suffer any one, uninvited, to meddle with his family affairs? Every free-born citizen is master in his own house; so grant the archon the same privilege and do not venture to further insult one to whom your respect and reverence are due.”

“We will respect and honor you if you fulfil the oath,” was the reply.

The archon glanced around him. On both sides of the propylæum stood a guard of six or eight men, armed with spears and oval shields glittering like gold. He felt, as his anger rose, that he was within a hair’s breath of uttering the fatal words: “Clear the market-place!”—Whether the soldiers had obeyed the command or not, this would have been the end of his authority. To press the crowd back with so small a force was impossible, and the party of malcontents were in the ascendant here.

Charidemus probably felt this. He controlled himself and sought safety in an affability that sounded somewhat forced.

“Friends and citizens,” he said, folding his arms. “You really amaze me! You are evidently under some delusion; you have been misinformed about the events that occurred in the secos of the temple of Aphrodite. But I wish to have the real state of affairs explained to my faithful Miles-tus. To-morrow, at the fitting hour, a herald

shall relate from the steps of the propylæum how everything occurred; you will then perceive that you have mistaken a farce for solemn earnestness, and that Cydippe never made a vow."

The storm of passionate outcries which now burst from the mob suddenly subsided, as if by some spell. The throngs of people stood charmed into utter silence. Cydippe herself had passed through the portal and now, with her hands clasped imploringly, stood beside the archon.

"Forgive me, Father," she said amid her tears. "It is not the people who are misled, but their magistrate. What Miletus says is true. I have made a solemn vow: Acontius of Mylasa shall be my husband. So, do not oppose the fulfilment of the oath! Do not be angry, dear Father, but, revering the goddess and the sacred decree of the oioniste, place your Cydippe's hand in her lover's."

As Charidemus stood gazing at her, absolutely speechless, she passed down the steps to Acontius.

"There, take me!" she said, smiling.

Amid the exulting roar of the mob, Acontius

clasped the hand offered him, while Cydippe, radiant with happiness yet full of anxiety, glanced backward at her father.

“Never!” cried Charidemus, as though suddenly awaking. “Seize him, men! Drag the wretch, who has deluded my daughter, to the senate dungeons. Forward! What delays you?”

It was too late. When the people saw Acontius threatened, they instantly assumed a bearing which gave cause to fear the worst consequences. Even in response to the passionate adjuration of Conon, who had hitherto remained in the background, not one of the soldiers stirred.

“Silence, Milesians!” shouted a voice in tones of thunder from the midst of the throng, “the noble Olorus wishes to speak.”

“Illustrious head of this city,” the young aristocrat began, “in the name of this excited populace, trembling for your safety and its own, I beseech you: do not oppose the will of the gods. You know the world and the disposition of men. All citizens are not well disposed, like myself and the friends who surround me. Hostile

elements are merely watching for a favorable moment to destroy the sacred order of affairs. Woe betide the community, and those who represent it, should any misfortune occur which could be interpreted as the goddess' punishment for the violation of the oath made to her. You see, my lord — even had Cydippe *not* made the vow she acknowledges: as a wise director of our destiny, you ought to fulfil the oath because all Miletus *believes* it. It is the burden and anxiety of distinguished offices that their holders can *not* act as independently as the most insignificant citizen. Power and rank impose obligations; they limit the freedom of their possessors, compel the repression of self-love and all selfish emotions. Let the truth of my words and their full expression of the will of the entire populace, be shown by the unanimity with which the people will join in the shout: “Long live Acontius, son-in-law of Charidemus!”

There was something bewitching in the young man's manner, which captivated even the indifferent. Thousands of voices rang out over the

market-place: "Long live Acontius, son-in-law of Charidemus!"

Conon, grinding his teeth, retired into the house. He knew that for the present he had lost his game. But Charidemus, alarmed by the helplessness of his soldiers and the tremendous power with which the popular will was knocking at his palace door, lost his firmness. The desire to rule was stronger than the arrogance of the aristocrat or his deeply rooted family pride. Haughtily and contemptuously as he would have treated every individual in this body of infuriated shouters, in the presence of the united throng, he suddenly seemed transformed.

"Give Acontius your hand!" shrieked the brazen voices. "It is the people's will, and the people's will is law here."

And lo, Charidemus, the imperious archon, the most aristocratic of aristocrats, yielded. He approached Acontius with an unsteady step—and pallid Olorus, smiling triumphantly, gazed at a scene he would have thought impossible, even in his boldest dreams. Acontius, the sculptor

from Mylasa, held in his left hand Cydippe's and with his right clasped her father's — received, before the whole populace, into the bosom of a family which had been so inaccessible to the most aristocratic and popular youths in Miletus.

CHAPTER VII.

A WOMAN'S WILES.

THE senate of Miletus on the following morning held a session of several hours' duration.

The first subjects under discussion were matters of foreign policy, relating especially to despatching an embassy to Corinth. It was unanimously agreed that towards the end of the month a ship should be fitted up which, in addition to the envoys of the senate, and a brilliant train of attendants, should convey a number of costly gifts to the most prominent Corinthian statesmen.

After the settlement of this and several other questions, Acontius' affair came under consideration. Charidemus complained most bitterly of the attitude assumed by the citizens, asserting that Olorus and the hostile party had bribed the populace and thus taken him by surprise in the most unprecedented manner. He now exhorted

the assembled senate to declare, of no value, the consent extorted from the archon by the people and thus show the world that law, not force and violence, reigned in Miletus.

The senate, however, was completely under the influence of public opinion. Its members had perceived the soothing effect produced upon the throng by the archon's decision, reluctant as it was, and had noted the sudden decrease of the gloom caused by the oionistes' augury. Therefore one of the group of Elders, who had been an eye-witness of the scene, declared with seeming astonishment that he did not understand how the illustrious archon could speak of surprise and force. To grant a passionately urged wish, was by no means synonymous with the endurance of illegal compulsion; the promise given must be sacredly kept; what would it lead to if the chief magistrate set the example of faithlessness?—So the discussion ended in a unanimous resolution, passed by the senate, to recognize the fact of Cydippe's marriage with the sculptor from Mylasa as being decided by the archon's consent, and to

beseech him to offer no farther opposition to so plain an expression of the goddess' will.

Trembling with secret rage, Charidemus left the assembly. In his private room he found the impatient Conon, who had been waiting for him a long time.

"Our cause is lost with the Elders!" cried Charidemus furiously, flinging his cloak over a chair with a violent gesture as though to say: I should like to hurl the office of archon at your feet in the same way. Then he continued:

"Are you surprised, Conon? True, when I think of it, my brain seems crushed beneath the burden of an unendurable disgrace, doubly unendurable because, according to form, the assembly is in the right. Ah! If I only had command of a few hundred Thracian or Sicilian mercenaries, instead of these sham soldiers with their gilt shields—I should know what to do. But my hands are tied. I must endure in silence."

"Unprecedented!" muttered Conon.

"It is your place to defend your rights," Charidemus continued. "Protect what I confided

to your care ! Secure possession of the girl you love ! I, the archon, cannot and ought not to oppose the legal decree of the senate : but you — your hands are free. Seize any weapon that offers itself to you ! Do not suffer Miletus to laugh at you, deride you as the outwitted lover who has to stand his disappointment."

A bitter laugh answered him.

"I, too, lack the Thracian mercenaries," replied Conon. "Yet I still hope to conquer, if you will grant me time. Continue to consent whenever you are urged ; but defer the fulfilment of your promise as long as possible. There will be no lack of pretexts, though I fear Acontius, when once acknowledged as your son-in-law, will passionately press his suit upon you."

"To bold impetuosity we will oppose craft and composure," said Charidemus. "Do what you can, but don't make me violate the law. Olorus—I have no doubt—will watch you sharply. With what eloquence he upheld this tradesman's son, though he must have known that you were a suitor for Cydippe's hand."

"He is a recreant," replied Conon. "Formerly he ranked himself among my friends, yet I confess from the beginning he had a way But let him beware!"

"Have you seen Cydippe?" asked the archon.

"For an instant, in the propylæum. She was being carried in her litter to the house of her friend, Iole."

"How did she greet you?"

"Courteously, as usual."

Conon now took his leave, and Charidemus, shaking his head, gazed after him.

"He does not understand how to win her heart," he said. "Incomprehensible! A man of his numerous advantages! In sooth, Eros does not wear the bandage over his eyes in vain."

Meantime, noon had arrived. Spite of his melancholy mood, Conon, from old habit, turned in the direction of the Street of the Harbor. As he passed Creon's monument he saw among the group of flower-girls, who had just taken their places in front of the pedestal of the statue, pretty Neaira. He was greatly surprised, for

Neaira had long since vanished from amid her companions. To-day she reappeared for the first time, and as she stood there in her gleaming yellow robe, with spring roses twined in her dark hair, she seemed to him more beautiful than ever. Her features had a strange, spiritual expression, her eyes looked larger than usual, yet their brightness vied with the flowers that decked her hair. True, it was not the bloom of former days but the flush of feverish excitement, which thus concealed the truth. This very Neaira, who now looked so rosy and full of life, had risen from her couch pale and haggard after a night spent in bitter tears. She had witnessed the scene that occurred the day before ; she had seen Acontius, radiant with happiness, clasp Cydippe's hand ; she had heard the exulting cheers of the populace. A dull feeling of despair and revenge had instantly awaked in her throbbing heart which, hitherto, spite of her disappointment, had still hoped. And, during the sleepless hours of the night, this longing for vengeance had gradually assumed form. She must prevent this unendur-

able thing — cost what it might ! Rather than suffer Acontius to become the husband of another, she would ruin the hated idol of her passionate longing. In the struggle against fate, Conon the disdained bridegroom, was her natural ally. With him plans might be devised. The sting of jealousy must be pressed deeper and deeper into the heart of the haughty, influential aristocrat, wounded pride must be stung with the sarcasm of contempt, in order to produce the reckless mood Neaira required.

Her first thought was to seek the young man in his home, but that step might be misinterpreted. Besides, after further reflection, she thought public irritation of the rejected lover promised better results. So she again took the flower-seller's basket that had lain in the corner covered with dust. Still trembling from the excitement of her grief, she hurried past Baios' forge to the gardener who had formerly supplied her wares. On her return she saw the smith standing in his doorway and greeted him in tones that sounded almost tender, for she now felt as

though she must win everybody to herself and her plans, as if she could not gain friends enough in the feud against Acontius. Rude Baios turned pale with joyful astonishment; forgetting to thank her for her kind words, he stood a long time as if rooted to the ground, still staring after her when she had long since vanished around the corner of the next street.

It was an event to the young aristocrats of Miletus, when pretty Neaira so suddenly appeared again at the archon Creon's monument, offering her fragrant treasures for sale. She was instantly surrounded. Even Conon forgot his bitter rage at his ill-fortune, and approached the charming flower-girl.

Neaira's eyes sparkled. She had not expected the fulfilment of her wish so speedily.

"Are you still alive, you darling?" asked Conon, advancing. "You've grown more beautiful than ever Have you been ill, Neaira? Or has Aphrodite bound you in her chains?"

"Neither," replied Neaira, carelessly.

“What heaps of roses and violets!” continued Conon. “And how gracefully arranged!”

He made a movement to select the prettiest bouquet, but Neaira laid her right hand over the basket to protect its contents.

“No, indeed!” she said distinctly.

“What does that mean?” asked Conon.
“Are your flowers sold?”

“No, but I will sell *you* nothing.”

Conon laughed.

“Why not, little simpleton?”

“Because I despise the coward who has let a beggar rob him of his bride.”

Conon turned pale.

“Are you out of your senses?” he whispered, frowning.

“By no means. I am only exercising my right. I can choose my customers as I please; and people I despise . . .”

“Insolent girl!” cried Conon, as he saw mocking smiles on the lips of the bystanders.

He seized the basket. Neaira grasped his wrist.

"Go!" she cried passionately, for the memory of her own misery now overpowered her. "Do you suppose I can be robbed of my property as easily as you?"

The spectators' smiles now merged into laughter. The arrogant Conon was not popular, and no one grudged the pitiable rôle Neaira was forcing upon him.

"Wench!" replied Conon, wrenching his hand free. The violent jerk made her let the basket fall, and loud cries of disapproval and sympathy echoed on all sides.

"There," said Conon, "now I hope you'll feel disposed to tell me the price of your flowers; goods that have lain in the dust, find no purchasers in Miletus."

Neaira covered her face with her hands and wept. Suddenly she adopted a gentler tone.

"Well then," she said hesitatingly. "You have gained your point. I must take your gold, for that is my only means of paying the gardener."

At this moment there was an eager stir amid the crowd.

“Cydippe!” ran from mouth to mouth.

In fact, the phoreion of the archon’s beautiful daughter, glittering with gold and purple, appeared in the crowded street. Cydippe was returning from her visit to Iole. Gracefully supporting her beautiful head with her fair arm, she reclined among the cushions of the litter, returning the greetings of the populace and winning every heart. Admiration for youth and beauty was a worship in Miletus, as in every other city inhabited by the Greeks. At the shout: “Cydippe!” all flocked in the direction of the lovely girl. Only Conon remained behind—and Neaira.

The flower-girl instantly availed herself of the favorable opportunity.

“Come,” she said, “do not be angry with me because, in my excitement, I used words that must have vexed you. I have always held you in high esteem, and I could not bear to have a low-born stranger thrust aside the descendant of such illustrious ancestors. Forgive me, Conon, and grant me your confidence, I will help you regain what you have lost.”

“ You ?” said Conon scornfully.

“ Yes, I !”

Her voice sounded so confident that Conon was startled.

“ How is that possible ?”

“ You shall hear, when I know whether or not you consider Neaira too insignificant for such services.”

“ Speak ! If you have any expedient that seems sensible and promises success, I should be a fool were I to disdain it.”

“ Well then, listen : I can prove by witnesses that Acontius is a scorner of the gods; nay, more, that he aspires to the archonship.”

“ You are raving.”

“ I say what I can answer for.”

Then, lowering her voice, she slowly added :

“ And, if the witnesses I bring you do not suffice, what in the world could prevent the wealthy, powerful Conon from completing their number ?”

“ What ?” asked Conon, turning pale as he already half-guessed her purpose.

"Gold has great influence over the hearts of men," said Neaira.

Conon fixed a piercing glance upon her face.

"What demon possesses you, girl?" he asked in amazement. "Do you want to persuade me that interest in me and my fate excites you thus? Or, are you yourself one of those who have an insatiable thirst for gold?"

"I? Oh! no," said Neaira bitterly. "I despise gold, I scorn it. I would live alone in the desert with only the scantiest food, far from all that adorns and beautifies life, if it were necessary to show you that I desire nothing, nothing for myself."

"So you love Acontius!" exclaimed Conon suddenly.

"I hate him," said Neaira firmly. "If I loved him, could I strive to ruin him? No, Conon! It is only a sense of justice that animates me, and friendship for you, who have ever treated me kindly."

She lowered her eyes in feigned confusion.

"Yes," she continued, "I have not forgotten

it. Did you not always call me sweet Neaira? Did you not praise my grace and skill? Enough for the present. Cydippe, the object of universal admiration, has passed by. The throng of gazers who hurried after her, as hounds pursue the game, are returning. This is no place to discuss matters of so much importance. If you wish to hear farther particulars, come to the western shore this evening, two hours after sunset, — to the spot where the street of Poseidon turns into the road to Didymoi. In future we must avoid being seen together anywhere."

"Very well. I will go."

While Conon walked slowly away, Neaira remained for a while with her half-crushed flowers, listening to consoling words from the young aristocrats and countless compliments referring to her long, inexplicable absence. The girl spoke angrily of Conon, who was not only cowardly, but thoughtless and violent, then she apparently banished the disagreeable incident from her mind. Arm-in-arm with one of the other flower-girls, who had now sold their goods, she wandered

through the motley crowd, jested and laughed, listened with well-feigned interest to the tales of her companion who was relating a strange adventure with Olorus — and finally accepted the invitation of two Athenians to row with them on the gulf crowded with flitting sails. These two youths were admirers and patrons of her companion; but one of them seemed strongly inclined to transfer his attentions to Neaira, and the latter, reserved as she had hitherto been toward the young aristocrats in the Street of the Harbor, now flirted with apparent pleasure.

“That coy Neaira has caught fire at last,” she heard a voice say as she entered the boat.

Neaira smiled. A passing expression of sorrow flitted over her flushed face and she closed her eyes, but only to dart a fiery glance at the young Athenian the next instant.

For two hours the light craft floated on the glittering tide. It was a spring day of really divine loveliness. All the gardens along the strand were gay with roses, and fresh, sun-lit green foliage. Music, half blown away by the

light sea-breeze, echoed over the water, and as the notes died away Neaira's companion began to sing in a voice of crystal clearness. The swelling rhythm expressed perfect contentment, bliss complete. The boat with the two young couples seemed the very symbol of a quiet, happy existence, threatened by no storms. Neaira, too, now began to sing so lightly and cheerfully, that no one suspected what was passing in the girl's throbbing heart.

On landing, Neaira hurried to the western quarter of the city where, since quitting old Laogoras, she had lived in the secluded house of a slave-born couple. She was not obliged to pass either Coronis' or Baios' dwelling to get from her lodgings to the heart of the city, and during all this time had only practiced her profession as a flute-player late in the evening just sufficiently to earn her livelihood, and at other times led so retired a life that neither Coronis nor Laogoras knew whether she was alive or dead.

Baios, too, had vainly sought her for weeks, and when he at last found her, met so unfriendly

a reception that he despaired of ever venturing to accost her again. Sometimes, however, he stole after her when she left her lodgings, but she never noticed it: she was so entirely absorbed by the one thought that had obtained the mastery over her.

On reaching the wretched hut Neaira did not as usual put her costly robe in a chest and exchange it for a plainer one. On the contrary, she took the metal-mirror, gazed intently into it, fastened the flowers that had become loosened here and there, and then, leaning her head on her hand, sat down on the edge of her bed, where she pondered and dreamed for nearly an hour. At last, when the sun was low in the heavens, she left the house and turned towards Baios' smithy.

Here she found work already over. A little lad, covered with soot, was squatting beside the dying fire, holding on his knees a basin in which he was slowly washing his hands. In reply to her question, the boy pointed to a half-open side-door. Neaira walked on and entered a pleasant

room where Baios and his mother, a woman of sixty, were taking a scanty meal.

As the young girl entered, the broad-shouldered fellow started up, while his mother, muttering a few unintelligible words, slowly retired.

“ You — Neaira ?” faltered Baios, finding words at last. “ What in the name of all the gods can bring *you* here ?”

“ You shall hear,” she answered, smiling and extending her hand to the bewildered man. “ Are we alone ?”

“ You see my mother has gone. She does not recognize you and imagines that a Persian princess, at the very least, has lost her way and wandered to this den. How you glitter, Neaira ! What a golden dress ! Ah ! and what glances, Neaira ! Speak ! why do you look at me as though you wanted to tear the heart out of my breast ? Are you playing me a trick, or have your feelings changed since the time you were so ill-disposed towards me ?”

“ I ?” replied the girl, laughing. “ I never disliked you in all my life — if I repulsed your

suit it was because I hated any tie that must limit my freedom. Now, my good Baios, I have changed my mind. Look here! How do you like me? Are my lips as fresh and red as they were last year? Are my cheeks as blooming, my arms as snowy white? Well? Will you take me, Baios?"

The smith trembled. Neaira had advanced nearer to him, and now, laying both hands on his brawny shoulders, looked up at him with the gaze of a siren.

"Will you?" she asked again.

It had required some time for the workman to persuade himself that Neaira was not jesting. Now he fell on his knees as if bewildered, clasped both arms around the slender, girlish figure and, with the impetuous roughness characteristic of him, kissed the folds of her robe. Neaira gazed at him with bitter satisfaction.

"Rise!" she said at last. "Wouldn't you like to try how my lips kiss?"

And, standing motionless, she endured the

passionate kiss Baios, thus encouraged, pressed upon her charming mouth.

Then, as grown bolder, he clasped her closer, she suddenly thrust him back, exclaiming :

“ Stay ! Baios must not reap so easily what he has sought for months in vain. Hear what I require of you, if you really wish me to become your wife.”

“ Speak, Neaira, speak !” gasped Baios, almost beside himself.

The girl grasped his hand. So soft and bewitching was the clasp of the dainty fingers on his horny fist, that Baios trembled with delight.

“ Well then,” she said curtly ; “ Acontius, the sculptor from Mylasa, has deeply insulted me. Never within the memory of man has an innocent friendship been repaid with such ingratitude, or so abused, as in this instance. Spare me the particulars. I should blush even to hint what Acontius has dared. When looking for a protector and avenger, I instantly thought of you, and told myself that I had been foolish to disdain your fidelity and devotion from mere girlish caprice.

So I vowed to accept your suit if I might hope that, by your courage, Acontius' insolence would receive its fitting punishment. How you accomplish this, I shall not ask. We may consult each other, but you will probably devise the best plan for yourself. But that you *do* attain it, I demand as a preliminary condition. This wretch's position in society must be destroyed, his happiness undermined, his life dishonored. Nay, if you know no better way, kill him — only procure me atonement for the unendurable insult. Will you, Baios? — and are you bold enough to carry out the affair?"

The smith's eyes gleamed and flashed beneath their lashes, the expression of his face became almost lynx-like. His former hatred of Acontius blazed up with renewed violence, and with a crafty smile resting on his broad, sensual face, he whispered:

"Only command, sweet Neaira, your Baios will obey, If I might win you and punish that scoundrel, no deed would be too bold for me. But I confess one thing: what cunning can ob-

tain for us, I shall ask reluctantly from open violence."

"You are perfectly right," said Neaira, and then gave him a few hints similar to those she had whispered to Conon by the monument in the Street of the Harbor.

Baios instantly kindled with enthusiasm. He perceived that this road, pursued with caution, was the surest and safest — but was not yet clear as to details. His thoughts from the beginning had flown to the grove of Didymoi where, in the deepest woodland solitude, lived a strange fellow. This person, a man about fifty named Phintias, was a servant of the priest of Apollo, but was secretly in league with a dreaded horde of Lemnian pirates, who two years and a half before, on the ground of his report, had made an unsuccessful attempt to land on the coast not far from Didymoi, and steal the temple treasures. The attempt had been baffled only by accident; but since then measures of precaution were increased until Phintias gradually despaired of obtaining the coveted wealth in this way. Baios had known

Phintias ever since the time when Baios himself, weary of working, had lived with the pirates, first at Andros and then at Lemnos, till fear of discovery, and perhaps repentance, disgusted him with this dissolute and dangerous course. After various wanderings he had finally come to Miletus, and at a festival in the grove of Apollo Didymus he had recognized his former comrade. Both men, the smith as well as the temple-servant, had ample reason to leave their past lives in darkness; so neither feared the other, nay on the second day of the festival, a certain degree of intimacy was renewed between them and, excited by wine, Phintias initiated Baios into the bold plans which had brought him, Phintias, under such difficult circumstances, to the sanctuary. He had even tried to win the smith as an accomplice; but Baios feigned not to understand him. Now, under the influence of Neaira's wiles, he remembered the comrade who was at once so cunning, so bold, and so avaricious, whose hopes had so long been fluctuating, and who would doubtless be disposed to sacrifice his uncertain share of the

future booty, if ready money were brought to him. Phintias himself must ponder over the details of the plan. Baios would seek him as soon as to-morrow's dawn appeared.

The smith only gave a hasty outline of all this, but the little he said was sufficient for Neaira. She did not doubt but Conon would be ready to sacrifice the largest sums to purchase this confederate, if the scheme were only clever and safe. So, with the tenderest words, she left the workman, and Baios relieved his heart of its burden of joy in sounds that recalled the uncanny howl of delight uttered by a wild beast.

CHAPTER VIII.

EXILED.

THE month Elaphebolion was over, and the month Munychion brought a premature glow of summer. Yet, on the first court-day of the month, when the sun was at its zenith, a countless multitude thronged the market-place and the neighboring streets, waiting impatiently for the result of the proceedings which, for nearly three hours, had been taking place in the halls of the Gerusia.

Acontius, the sculptor from Mylasa, had a serious charge to answer before the tribunal of the Senate. Conon's accusation was that of treason to the country. Acontius was said to have entered into a league with the Lemnian pirates, and to have cherished the design of aiding the corsairs, with the help of some fellow-confederates still unknown, to effect a landing at Miletus. Damaging testimony was given

by numerous witnesses. First came Baios, the smith, who had seen the accused one evening on the quays of the western suburb, engaged in conversation with two strangers. Then there was Lysis-trate, the flute-player, who, though not without some contradictions, told a tolerably plausible story of Acontius, having urged her, with promises of money, to draw the archon into her snares, so that she, as the object of the chief magistrate's love, might get possession of the important seal Acontius needed, to forge commands and directions to different city officials. Above all, there was Phintias, himself a comrade of the Lemnian pirates, who, from the safe hiding-place of a remote island, had written to the archon, declaring himself ready, if promised indemnity from punishment, to disclose the whole plot.

These things had been the sole topic of conversation in the city for many days. At Phintias' first accusation, Acontius had been seized and conveyed to the dungeons of the state. To-day the Gerusia was to decide his destiny. Public opinion was divided. The majority yielded to

the weight of what they regarded as facts. The minority, headed by Olorus and his friends, believed the whole matter to be a clever plot of Conon and did not delay in spreading this opinion as widely as possible. Even in the body of the Senate sitting in judgment, scepticism had its prominent representatives; especially a person of the rank of Melanippus, who solemnly averred that from what he had seen of Acontius, he believed the young sculptor totally incapable of repaying with treason and base ingratitude, the city's kindness and hospitality. Yet the youth's situation seemed extremely critical. The news, that from time to time reached the swarming Agora, was not calculated to raise the hopes of Olorus and his friends. Conon carried out his accusation with irrefutable consistency. But there was one singular circumstance: although, by virtue of his disclosures, Acontius' guilt was proved beyond a doubt, Conon did not, as the law required, urge the death penalty, but recommended the blinded, misguided youth, to the mercy of the Gerusia and only asked that he should be banished.

“A guilty conscience!” said Olorus’ followers. “He doesn’t want to stain his hands with innocent blood, for he fears the Erinnysi. But he considers it no crime to scatter lies and fraud, and remove his rival from his path at any cost, even though he destroys his happiness and honor.”

An hour after noon an excited murmur ran through the ranks of the people. The Gerusia had pronounced sentence. In accordance with Conon’s motion, their verdict was exile for life as well as confiscation of everything Acontius had hitherto earned by his skill with the chisel. The sentence, which permitted no appeal, was to be executed that very night, making much of the opportunity afforded by the departure of the government vessel for Corinth. The Milesian embassy was charged to convey the condemned traitor across the sea and put him ashore on the island of Rheneia, where Miletus had a small colony. There the exile would be sufficiently under guard to prevent any attempt to escape, especially as Rheneia had scarcely any intercourse except with the neighboring island of Delos.

Acontius, with drooping head, passed through the pillared doorway by Melanippus' side. His agitated face expressed keen anguish and, as though the sight of this mute misery touched each heart, the crowd fell back on the right and left, without uttering even one of the jeers with which the easily-excited populace usually greeted a condemned foe of their native land.

"Hope on!" said Melanippus, gently embracing the youth with his right arm as they moved forward. "Trust the goddess, who will not so easily destroy what has been reared under her auspices and favor. She desires to prove you, Acontius, to learn whether you can endure the burden of this calamity. Raise your soul upward to her radiant height! Pay her homage and believe in her exhaustless power: thus you will conquer."

Acontius was unable to reply. Spite of his endeavor to control himself in the presence of the populace, the fall from the summit of happiness to the abyss of misery and exile was too great. Tears dimmed his eyes and he sobbed aloud.

“Do not doubt,” Melanippus continued, “that I shall labor without a moment’s rest to tear asunder your malicious rival’s web of deceit. You have one consolation, my friend: Cydippe is as firmly convinced of your innocence as you yourself are, and will be constant to the husband of her choice; for though she has apparently been led and guided, the free choice of her heart has decided in your favor.”

As Melanippus paused, Olorus, with patrician dignity, approached the two men.

“Here is my hand, Acontius,” he said, loud enough to be heard by hundreds of the people. “I do not censure the judgment of the Gerusia, the illustrious assembly undoubtedly decided according to the best of their knowledge, but as men they are liable to err and that they have erred no one is more thoroughly convinced than I. Call me your friend, Acontius.”

Though the circumstance that the condemned man had come forth accompanied by the priest of Aphrodite produced an impression on the crowd, the Milesian aristocrat’s words exerted a far

deeper influence. The priest might act from sympathy, he could show indulgence even to the worst criminal. But Olorus, unless firmly convinced of the condemned man's innocence, would undoubtedly have avoided giving him even a word of greeting, far less this warm-hearted assurance. So, immediately after the verdict was pronounced, the number of those in favor of Acontius increased with marvellous rapidity.

Acontius and Melanippus had paused a few instants when Olorus addressed them. As they now moved on, a woman's light robe gleamed amid the motley crowd at their right, and looking up Acontius met Neaira's sparkling eyes. As the flower-girl had remained absent from the legal proceedings, and her name had not once been mentioned during the depositions made by the witnesses, Acontius had not the slightest suspicion that her thirst for vengeance had caused his sad fate. Even the stormy scenes he had formerly had with her were dimmed by the memory of the bright, sunny hours of his first artistic work in Miletus, whose good star had been Neaira,

with her unvarying gayety. A faint ray of gratitude, of secret sympathy, flitted over his face as he recalled the time when, free from care and full of bright hopes, he had sculptured the "Shepherdess Returning Home." Neaira seemed to him the embodiment of those peaceful days, and his features clearly expressed these tender and sorrowful feelings.

Neaira perceived this, and the cold triumph which, spite of all self-control, had blazed in her eyes, suddenly yielded to another emotion. She felt as though all the wounds she had inflicted on her foe had been dealt to herself. She, too, recalled the past, and the secret, yearning love which had robbed her of her peace and yet made her so infinitely happy. Doubtless her anger would soon wake again at the consciousness that Acontius had disdained her heart, but the chord of memory once struck could not immediately cease to sound. The proud, fierce satisfaction she had hitherto felt gave way to a sense of depression. She hurried home, shut herself into her little cheerless room and, sobbing bitterly, threw herself on her couch.

Meantime, Acontius went home with Melanippus. They still had three hours before the ship sailed, and faithful Clitiphon, by his master's orders, attended to everything at Coronis' house, paid what was due, and brought back, as the sole possession allowed the exiled man by his judges, the scanty bundle of clothing he had carried during his walk from Mylasa to Miletus. An attempt to speak with the sorrowing Cydippe failed; Charidemus kept the strictest watch upon his daughter.

So the two men spent the remainder of the day in earnest conversation. Acontius, who at first had been inconsolable, gradually became calmer. Melanippus knew the island of Rheneia from his own inspection — a rocky, charmless spot, but rained on by Cronion and circled, like the fairest isles of the archipelago, by all-embracing Poseidon, whose rippling waves bore a greeting from the Milesian strand. The olive flourished on the less rugged northwestern coast, while amid the fields of barley grew bright-hued anemones and the dark acanthus. The Milesian sailors, who had established a village there, were honest, tolerant

folk, who would be friendly to the exile and help him if he needed them. Olorus' father had once spent a year in Rheneia and, when permitted to return to Miletus, had always praised the behavior of the colonists and induced the mother city to release them during three Olympiads from the payment of the tax imposed.

So the priest succeeded in giving the youth courage and calmness.

When the sun was setting, Acontius went on board the trireme which was to put out to sea at nightfall. As, besides the archon's two spearmen, Melanippus bore him company, the chief of the embassy received the exile with a certain degree of consideration, permitted him to remain on deck as long as he pleased and move about freely. Melanippus thanked the courteous statesman and, after once more embracing the young artist, retired. Directly after the signal was given to weigh anchor.

The voyage past the Tragasaean Isles into the open archipelago was quiet and uneventful. Above the heights of Latmos, whose topmost peak was

still illumined by the sunset glow, hung the pale-yellow disk of the moon, promising a clear, calm night. The receding city sank deeper and deeper into the shades of twilight. The monotonous rippling of the waves against the keel, and the regular rise and fall of the oars, exerted a doubly lulling influence upon Acontius in this pale, silvery gloaming. Wearied by the manifold emotions of the day, he sought his couch long ere the ship had passed the Trogilian Cape. A dull apathy which had taken the place of conflicting anxieties, made him fall asleep more quickly than he had hoped. Yet his slumber was not refreshing. He saw himself constantly striving to rend all sorts of nets which Conon threw over his shoulders. And, if he fancied he had conquered one foe, mastered one obstacle, a fresh one, still more dangerous and unexpected, confronted him with incredible persistency — vague in form and purpose, but felt painfully and heavily as a check to his own will. It was the stereotyped dream of powerless restlessness which accompanies mental and bodily fever.

Almost at the same time that the government trireme weighed her anchor, a ship put to sea from one of the secluded bays of the Corassian Isles, a ship which, if it rowed with the same speed as the Milesian vessel, must cross the latter's course just between Samos and Argia. This was the terror of the archipelago: Chalaze, the dreaded trireme of the Lemnian corsairs, swifter and more nimble than any other keel which furrowed the Hellenic sea. Steering at first a little towards the south the Chalaze, for nearly two hours, kept almost due west. Her commander, a bearded Henioch of gigantic stature and savage countenance, sat with two companions, bending over a black parchment on which was rudely drawn the outlines of the coast of Asia Minor and the western half of the archipelago. From time to time he went on deck and consulted a third companion who, leaning against the mast, was watching the position of the stars.

The silent watchfulness of the crew of the huge ship indicated that the Chalaze was seeking an important prize, which was, in truth, the am-

bassadors' vessel from Miletus. Conon, who did not undervalue the influence of young Olorus and his daily increasing party, and was also tortured by the secret anxiety which is a constant companion of crime, feared that Acontius, even when far away, would remain a dangerous rival and would not rest until he had discovered some way to prove his innocence. Olorus and Melanippus could not be prevented from keeping up an intercourse with the exile; the mood of the populace seemed incalculable, and who could tell by what accident Acontius' situation might undergo a change. There was only *one* way to entirely remove the hated rival, if Conon shrunk from the extreme measure — secret assassination; he must rob him forever of his personal freedom. So, with the aid of the pirate Phintias, he hit upon the idea of having the condemned man, before he reached his destination, seized and dragged to the great slave-mart, where he could be sold far away to one of the barbarous countries of Asia. Phintias had suggested this plan, not without the thought that this opportunity would afford the

Lemnian corsairs a series of extra gains in addition to the sum Conon paid. The gorgeous ambassadors of course travelled with considerable sums of ready money, without counting the valuable gifts they were bearing in the name of the city to distinguished members of the senate of Corinth. The pirates had promised to let the embassy quietly continue their journey after Acontius had been captured, and Phintias agreed to guarantee this with his head. But levying a contribution seemed, to the wily temple-servant, perfectly reconcilable with a literal fulfilment of this promise.

The muscular Henioch, Olbius, who for several days had been kept informed of every fact worth knowing, set to work with an assurance of victory. The Milesian ship, it is true, carried a number of armed men, but scarcely half so many as the Chalaze. For five or six years this portion of the archipelago had seemed perfectly safe. The pirates from Lemnos, frequently driven into the straits, had confined themselves more and more to the northern portion; it was considered certain that the time of their predatory excursions

southward was entirely over, especially as the terrible punishment inflicted by the Athenians upon the crews of the two pirate ships was still freshly remembered. Besides his superior force, Olbius could therefore count upon the unexpectedness of the attack, and moreover, as he knew, the men on the ambassadors' ship were almost all parade-soldiers, who had never been in battle.

An hour after midnight the Henioch was informed that a ship was in sight in the direction of the Milesian coast. The size of the vessel, which rapidly approached, and the gay streamers of unusual length and width that fluttered like flags on the breezes of the clear night, left no doubt that the object of their bold enterprise was before them, and Olbius instantly gave orders to prepare for battle. If the Milesian did not voluntarily stop and yield to the demands of the Chalaze, the foe must be boarded according to the rules of naval warfare.

The two ships were now only a few hundred yards apart. On board the Milesian, the Chalaze was believed to be an Attic merchantman and

therefore attention was directed solely to avoiding a collision, though the helmsman was surprised to find that the supposed trader not only did not turn aside, but steered directly into the course of the Milesian. Perceiving this, the captain of the ambassadors' trireme ordered the oars to be raised, and as this measure did not suffice, that they should be thrust into the water to serve as a drag.

The Chalaze also moderated her speed. Olbius, the pirate chief, now came forward to the extreme point of the prow and shouted in resonant tones across the water, that he had important business to transact with the captain of the trireme.

“Who are you?” was the answering shout from the Milesian ship.

“Mariners like yourselves,” replied the Henioch. “A misfortune compels us to interrupt your voyage a few moments. On the strand of Icaria we lost the fair-haired Aletes, our singer and jester, and I vowed by Poseidon, the embracer of the world, that the next vessel we met

should replace our loss. So permit us to come on board and choose from among your people one that pleases us. And, that you may understand in advance whose request you will fulfil, know that I am Olbius, the giant of Lemnos, and this vessel is the renowned Chalaze, with whose glorious expeditions to Thessaly, Macedonia, and Troas you are familiar."

The corsair's crew burst into rude laughter. Never before had Olbius spoken so verbosely and with such open scorn. But, at the name Chalaze, a perfect panic took possession of the men on board the Milesian. The embassy was composed of highly-cultured, polished statesmen, agreeable old men and handsome youths ; but these people had more dignity than strength, more grace and intellect than personal courage. The conduct of the soldiers of the Gerusia was most cowardly of all. "We are lost !" ran from lip to lip. "The Chalaze is pitiless."

It was a sorrowful spectacle to behold ! Roused suddenly from their sleep, with disordered hair and their himations thrown hurriedly over

their shoulders, the members of the embassy hastened to the deck and addressed the soldiers urging them not to lose courage, nor forget how praiseworthy it is to die for one's native land. If there was any means less calculated to transform the novices' faint-heartedness into courage and valor, it was surely the tremulous weakness of their terrified monitors.

Olbius, whose trireme came nearer and nearer, perceived by the anxious moving to and fro on the deck of the Milesian, which resembled the swarming of an ant-hill, that no serious resistance was to be apprehended. Satisfied with the crushing impression his first address had produced, he left the people on the trireme to themselves. A sudden necessity for self-defence might overcome their cowardice, while if left to grovel deeper and deeper in the slough of their pitiful fear, the panic would doubtless spread and the Chalaze perhaps thereby easily gain the victory.

The head of the embassy endeavored, for honor's sake, to impress upon them the necessity of defence. But what he said sounded so cold, so

theoretical, that it was not listened to for an instant. Without even consulting him, one of the ambassadors stepped forward and shouted shrilly across to the Chalaze :

“ We are willing to treat with you, if your demands are not unreasonable. Tell us what you want, that we may discuss the matter.”

Olbius laughed, and the clash of his comrades’ swords rattled an echo.

Meantime, the running and talking had waked Acontius. He listened. The noise increased. He started up, slipped on his chiton, and ran on deck. Just at that moment the clash of weapons echoed menacingly across the water, shields and swords glittered in the moonlight. And now the pirate chief raised his powerful voice.

“ Fill your largest mixing-vessel with coined gold and let us choose a substitute for the lost Aletes — then you may continue your voyage unharmed.”

Excited murmurs on board the Milesian followed this echoing shout. Some of the ambassadors uttered a sigh of relief; they were rich

enough to grant the demand, and if one of the sailors was dragged off as a slave, it mattered little to them. Others, who loved their money no less than their liberty, sighed heavily, but their discreet nods showed that they saw no way of escape. Not one thought of the possibility of resistance, though the trireme was stoutly built and extremely easy to manage, and the soldiers of the senate did not take their turn in toiling at the oars, like the crew of the Chalaze, but until a short time before had been sleeping on comfortable woollen rugs.

At the sight of this pitiful weakness the hot blood crimsoned Acontius' face, and, approaching the head of the embassy, he said firmly:

“If it will not shame you and proud Miletus to have an exile bear arms in your defence, give me a sword. I will take part in the approaching conflict.”

All eyes rested in astonishment on the brave, handsome youth, who had spoken the first manly words uttered. The chief ambassador frowned. A sense of shame overpowered him, a shame so

fierce, so burning, that it found vent in furious indignation against the terrified companions whose example, as it were, had misled him. One of the youths, too, felt an emotion akin to repentance, and with feverish eagerness supported his leader's words, vowing by all the gods that he would fight to the death rather than voluntarily agree to a course disgraceful to Miletus and the embassy. But these ebullitions made no impression on the majority. The stout senator, who had just addressed the insolent Olbius, was already dragging forward the silver mixing-vessel with his own hands, while another, kneeling before the helmsman's lantern, was calculating on his tablets how large a sum the terrible tax would be for each individual. The unlucky vessel swallowed an enormous amount. All the ready money on the ship was not enough to fill it, and they saw with horror that, if Olbius insisted upon his demand, he would require hostages to guarantee the future payment of the sum required.

But the Henioch was more generous than the Milesians expected. Four of his men came on

board, looked at the booty and, after the zealous senator had sworn by Zeus Horkios that not a drachma was concealed from the illustrious Olbius, declared themselves satisfied.

Then one of the party — Olbius' brother — continued :

“Now for the second condition! As I stepped on your trireme's deck, I heard the name of Acontius. Which of you bears it?”

Twenty hands pointed to the sculptor from Mylasa.

“Is it the same Acontius who can draw so well and carve marble so superbly?”

The senator who had just made up the account answered in the affirmative.

“Then I want *him* for the captain's slave,” said the pirate. “Whoever understands such arts will know how to give pleasure in other ways.”

“Of course,” said the senator, “he sings, he can use the plectrum. . . .”

Acontius advanced close to the old coward.

“You seem in haste to make this shameful bargain,” he said contemptuously. “Or do you

fear for your own head? Know, scoundrel, that if this hand which, in the service of the muse, has striven to create the beautiful, was not too precious for the purpose, I would knock your teeth down your false throat."

"Forward!" urged the pirates, as the bewildered senator moved aside, muttering secret curses. "Follow us, Acontius!"

"Into slavery!" laughed the sculptor, with fierce contempt. "Not voluntarily!"

With these words, he rushed towards the ship's side to plunge into the sea. But two of the soldiers, fearing that, if Acontius escaped, the lot of bondage might fall to one of them—for both were tall, stout fellows—seized the fugitive's chiton and, ere he could defend himself, his hands were tied and he was dragged away with the golden booty. Amid loud shouts of exultation from the corsair, the Chalaze steered toward the northwest, while the ship bearing the Milesian embassy turned back with the sorrowful company, since, bereft of all resources and robbed of their costly gifts, they could not land upon the shores of Corinth.

CHAPTER IX.

AT THE COURT OF ICARIA.

MEANTIME, it had become noised abroad in Miletus that Melanippus had favored Acontius' stratagem in the sanctuary of the temple of Aphrodite. When the ambassadors' vessel returned with their mission unperformed and brought news of the trick played upon them by the pirate ship, voices were raised, declaring that the contribution levied was a punishment from angered Aphrodite, since the goddess, who had risen from the depths of the sea, bestowed successful or disastrous voyages. Many saw in the seizure of Acontius— spite of the circumstances which bore testimony against it—an act of liberation, and asserted that the sculptor's confederates had risked everything to rescue him from the Milesian's hands. The marriage planned between Acontius and the beautiful Cydippe was connected with the supposed plots of the pirates. The sculptor had

intended to deliver up the city to the corsairs, and for this purpose had endeavored to obtain a position which would have enabled him to exert an influence over public affairs.

Conon made every effort to foster and spread these rumors. Now that Acontius was removed from his path, his anger was directed against the priest of Aphrodite, in whom he had recently recognized the real source of the whole misfortune. A temple-servant who had listened to the conversation between the priest and Acontius, turned traitor. The stratagem which had lured the oath from Charidemus' daughter had emanated from Melanippus' brain: reason enough to hate the priest, cause enough to fear him; for it was to be expected that Melanippus would not desert his exiled favorite, but seek to awaken sympathy in Olorus' party and all who believed Acontius innocent.

The incident connected with the ambassadors' ship offered the desired opportunity to influence public opinion in the direction of Conon's wishes. If Aphrodite was offended — as indicated by the

misfortune attending the flight of the doves — it was easy to find the source of her displeasure in the conduct of her priest. That the introduction of temporal matters into the duties of the religious worship of the ancients had always been customary, nay that the spring festival in Miletus, especially, afforded a sort of warrant for love-strategies, were facts unheeded by Conon and his impetuous companions. Indeed, a priest's participation in such wiles — allowable in themselves — had never been unprecedented in Miletus. Therefore, the servant who had betrayed Melanippus adorned the tale, at Conon's instigation, with all sorts of suspicious additions.

So, shortly after the return of the trireme, a spirit of dissatisfaction manifested itself, which developed more and more into open hostility against the priest of Aphrodite. The people seemed glad to have found an object on which they could vent their anger, and especially their fear of the pirates. It seemed an evil omen that Olbius and his notorious Chalaze should have entered the peaceful waters of the Corassian Isles,

and been bold enough to treat a Milesian government vessel as unceremoniously as the craft of petty coast traders, and levy contributions with derisive scorn. Aphrodite must be reconciled, and this could only be done by making the offender, the thoughtless Melanippus — who, spite of his grey hairs, possessed too much youthful feeling, atone for his folly.

An immense throng gathered in front of the priest's house and there was a noisy demonstration. Then, joining in close ranks, the people marched to the halls of the Gerusia, defiantly demanding that the senate should look into the matter and consider whether Melanippus was to retain his office.

The priest of Aphrodite, deeply wounded, formed a hasty resolution. When the Gerusia, by Conon's urging, had assembled, he appeared unsummoned before the tribunal and requested a hearing.

“Men of Miletus,” he said firmly, “I know what subject will occupy your attention to-day, whether you desire it or not; for the voice of the

people compels even the wise and calm to obey its mandate. Miletus needs an atonement—less for what the excited people blame me than for her own fault: the weakness and cowardice of her ambassadors. I here offer myself as a sacrifice—for, in truth, my pride would not endure being compelled by your decree, or even by the rude violence of the mob, to do what I voluntarily undertake. Illustrious Elders, I resign into your hands my office of priest of Aphrodite, and will go into exile for a year on the island of Icaria. When that time has passed, I shall expect your letter requesting my return. If it does not come, I shall never see Miletus again."

The Gerusia, greatly pleased with this happy expedient, which promised to soothe the excited populace without requiring measures that would prejudice the dignity of the priestly office, thanked Melanippus for his generous offer and, with a few courteous phrases, accepted it.

Two days after, Melanippus, accompanied by a single slave, embarked on a ship. Clitiphon, with two other servants, remained in Miletus as

steward of the house, which was his master's private property.

At that time Icaria was ruled by the Tyrant Philostratus, a wise, temperate, art-loving monarch, allied on his mother's side to the family of young Olorus, but in other respects not especially friendly to Miletus, whose inhabitants threw all sorts of difficulties in the way of the Icarians' commerce, and would not suffer Icarian merchant vessels to sail the Latmian Gulf except on payment of an oppressive tax. Melanippus had a friendship of many years' duration with one of the residents of Drakanon, and it was the memory of these relations which had induced him, on first forming his plan, to think of Icaria. After the priest had named this island before the assembled Gerusia as the goal of his journey, Olorus hurried to his house and offered him letters to Philostratus — a favor Melanippus gratefully accepted.

So, furnished with Olorus' letters, he landed, after a ten hour's voyage, at Drakanon.

The friend, whom Melanippus went first to greet, had died several weeks before, but Philo-

tratus received the lonely man all the more cordially.

"I rejoice," said the monarch, "that for once, after I and my subjects have encountered nothing but vexation and evil for so many long years, something good has come to me from Miletus. By the gods, if I did not believe that peace, even though purchased by sacrifices, was a blessing to nations, and war, even if everything for which it strove was attained, a curse—I should have showed the Milesians long ago that Philostratus' battle-ships are no nut-shells. But I still hope that some day Miletus will be governed by a majority who will understand that my demands will benefit, not only the citizens of Icaria, but the Milesians themselves."

Then he enquired for Olorus, who was one of the few clever heads that had gained a reputation in Miletus—once a zealous philosopher, he was now interesting himself in the affairs of the city and state.

"It is two years," he continued, "since I last saw the clever youth. It was in Corinth. Our

interview was short, but even then I predicted grand and noble achievements for him in the future. When later we recline at table my honored guest, you must tell me farther particulars of his career, and especially the strange events to which Olorus merely alludes in his letter. From all I divine, this Conon seems to throw even the archon Charidemus into the shade. Pitiable Miletus!"

The first meal in the ruler's palace almost sealed the warm friendship, which was to be developed during the next few weeks between Philostratus and Melanippus. The priest found himself sympathetically attracted by the monarch's simple, straightforward, upright character. Everything connected with Philostratus bore the stamp of thorough honesty and directness. He was not one of those despots who impoverish their people to riot at the expense of their toiling subjects. On the contrary, Philostratus was frugal in the expenditures for his court — there was but one province in which he did not spare his gold: art. The domatia and halls of his palace were adorned

with costly paintings, its colonnades were decked with the masterpieces of Athenian and Corinthian sculptors, and whenever a travelling rhapsodist came that way, singing the ancient songs of the wrath of Achilles, and the wanderings of the divine Laertes, he was dismissed with rich gifts.

Four weeks after Melanippus' arrival, one of these rhapsodists, at a banquet given in honor of the Tyrant's birthday, sung, amid thunders of applause, the arrival of Ulysses in the land of Phæacia. The day had been stormy; heavy clouds still hung over the dripping roofs of Drakanon, and the guests had joyfully hailed the hour for lighting the lamps in the banqueting-hall; in the golden radiance of the steadily burning wicks, the gloom and dullness outside could be forgotten.

Just at that moment, one of the nobles attached to the monarch's court brought tidings that a skiff had been shipwrecked northwest of the dyke and, driving upon the rocky coast, had cast ashore a youth who now lay senseless in the hut of a fisherman near by.

“Ulysses on the shore of Phæacia!” said

Philostratus. "The coincidence with the bard's song makes a strange impression upon me. Let us show him the same kindness that was bestowed on the son of Laertes."

Then, turning to the youth who had brought the message, he continued :

"Go yourself, Ximmias, and be sure that nothing is neglected to secure his recovery. The surname 'hospitable,' that has been bestowed on our Drakanon, imposes obligations. If he is alive, as your report leads us to suppose, and of free lineage, let him be brought to the palace, if it is possible to do so without danger. If he is a slave, place him in charge of the harbor-master. If his soul has fled to Hades, follow the custom of the city ; have him laid where his body will be safe from profanation, put the obolus under his tongue and provide for his funeral obsequies."

The courtier withdrew, returning after the lapse of an hour. The stranger lived and had recovered his senses. He was a native of Mylasa, and free-born, so he had been brought into the palace. His name was Acontius.

At these words Melanippus started up. To his deep grief, he had remained all this time without obtaining any news of his favorite. Now chance had brought the vanished man to the very strand of Icaria, with a rude hand, it is true, as though fate were thus fulfilling the curse of a hostile divinity, but to the joy of his friend and — so the priest hoped — for the future benefit of the shipwrecked sculptor.

Philostratus, too, displayed eager sympathy. The young artist's name had become familiar to him from Melanippus' story. The expression of genuine pleasure that rested on the monarch's manly handsome features, assured the priest that Acontius would have a no less gracious reception at the Tyrant's court than he had himself received.

The very next day Philostratus invited the youth to come to his private room with Melanippus. The sculptor's manner and bearing charmed the prince, who desired nothing better than to keep the young master permanently in Icaria. There was ample room in Drakanon for the exer-

cise of his creative talent: first of all, a fitting statue of Zeus, with which the new temple in the centre of the city was to be adorned, and a series of busts with which Philostratus desired to embellish the aula of his palace — a favorite idea of the prince, and the execution of which had hitherto been thwarted because the works produced by different masters did not harmonize in size and style.

Both the monarch and priest were eager to learn from Acontius the recent course of his fate and, while strolling under the huge plane-trees in the garden, the young sculptor related what Philostratus wished to know.

“The cowards on the Milesian ship,” he began, “have probably told how the pirates dragged me on board the Chalaze, but they doubtless maintained a discreet silence about their own contemptible conduct and the pitiful part Miletus played in the affair. The motives for the corsair’s deed will surprise you. The captain’s brother told me within an hour. Conon bought the pirates; the attack was on *me*; I was to be

removed from his path ; banishment to the island of Rheneia seemed to him too slight a guarantee of my permanent harmlessness."

" Scoundrel !" murmured Melanippus.

" But how did the captain's brother chance to explain this to you ?" asked Philostratus.

" Who can tell ? He assured me that the bluntness with which I hurled the truth in the face of one of the Milesian senators had pleased him, and also my sudden attempt to escape. I rushed to the ship's side to plunge into the sea. Such men, with all their lawlessness, often have a primitive sense of right and justice — and that I was in the right against the Milesian cowards, you will admit. In short, I thus obtained full proof of what I had known from the beginning, without being able to assert it : that it was Conon who contrived the whole plot against me."

" Admirable !" said Melanippus, " though unhappily this proof is of little service to us, since we lack the witnesses. Olbius' brother will hardly be disposed to appear before the tribunal of the Milesian senate as Conon's accuser."

"Yes, I perceive that," replied Acontius.

"Where did the Chalaze convey you?" asked the prince.

"First to Lemnos, where the ship lay for some time. There Olbius' brother unfortunately landed to join an expedition to the Thracian coasts. Directly after, the Chalaze put to sea again, and now occurred the misfortune which, relying on this man's favor, I had hoped to prevent. In Ephesus, which we reached a few days later, I was sold to a slave-trader. In vain I upbraided him with knavery and treachery. The law upheld him, and my violent resistance to the authority of this noble master was so effectually destroyed by chains and the bast-rope that, after a short time, I resolved to submit to my fate, while secretly watching for an opportunity to escape. At the end of three days I was purchased by a wealthy merchant, a resident of Samos, who had come to Ephesus on business. He took me with him to the capital of the island and from thence to the northern coast, where he owns a superb villa in a shady cove. To make him feel secure, I served

him for some time with the docility of a child. Early yesterday morning, just as day was beginning to dawn, I carried out a plan formed long before. Supplied with a small stock of provisions, I stole to the shore and cut loose one of the barges that lay moored in rows, awaiting the pleasure-voyages of their owners. My destination was the Corassian Isles, where I hoped to find men by whose aid I could reach Halicarnassus. The storm surprised me in the open sea. For three or four hours I struggled desperately against the tempest, till at last my strength failed. Then I lay down in the bottom of the boat and shut my eyes to await death. I was so utterly exhausted that, in spite of the fierce raging of the gale, I slept at intervals for several moments, to be suddenly waked again when a specially violent shock almost upset my little craft. Towards evening I again tried my luck, but misfortune willed that I should break an oar. So, even had my strength and skill been sufficient to cope with the elements, I was entirely at their mercy. Then, in the hour of my deepest despair, I lifted my heart

in prayer to Aphrodite. It seemed as though the goddess appeared amid the cloud-rack — and her face wore the features of Cydippe. One cry of terror — and my senses failed. When consciousness returned, I found myself in a fisherman's hut on the shore of Drakanon."

" And Philostratus, Prince of Icaria, bids you welcome to this coast," said the monarch. " Melanippus calls you friend — that alone would suffice to rouse my interest in you and your destiny. You shall create and carve here to your heart's content — and I, who know artists, am sure that I can offer you nothing better than free space for the development of your noble talent. Believe me, it was Aphrodite who saved you from storm and danger, and in her honor the first statue you chisel must wear her divine features. As soon as you have fully recovered, set to work for me. I will commence the series of statues of the gods in my aula with that of the Foam-born."

Acontius thanked the prince. In fact, he could have no better balm for his grief than the creative labor of the artist.

He began his task the following day. With glowing face, he shaped the pliant clay, and at the end of a week the design from which he was to carve stood complete before his tear-dimmed eyes. It was the goddess as he had dreamed of her in his boyhood, the most perfect ideal of feminine beauty and sweetness: Aphrodite, the mistress of gods and men; — but, it was also in every line Cydippe, Charidemus' daughter, the object of his ardent love, for whom his heart was constantly longing. He was no longer able to separate the mortal from the goddess; to him they were one and the same; his love and his devout adoration blended in the marvellous statue. Yet, if any earth-born creature seemed worthy to adorn his house with this statue, it was Philostratus, the wise, kind, and just ruler of Icaria. Cydippe as the protecting deity of this palace! Nay, it was no profanation, any more than the erection in a temple of the statue of a god.

Philostratus was fairly enraptured at the sight of the clay model. He embraced and kissed the young artist, then said with sparkling eyes:

"Nothing but my friendship can repay you for this masterpiece. All I possess is too little."

Melanippus recognized the original of the creation which had produced so powerful an impression on Philostratus, but he made no remark, wishing to spare the youth the anguish which always burst forth anew, whenever the lovely Cydippe was mentioned. During the last few days, the priest himself had become disheartened and anxious. According to a message which had reached Drakanon from his faithful Clitiphon, Conon's ceaseless machinations had not remained wholly unsuccessful.

Clitiphon's letter ran thus :

"In accordance with your repeated command, I inform you, oh, my lord, of what, according to my opinion, will be of importance to you.

"We manage your household affairs with the utmost care, living daily in the hope that our dear master will soon be permitted to return to Miletus.

"The mood of the people, so far as I can judge, has changed very little. Conon appears to do

everything in his power to awaken and foster hostility against you, our beloved master.

“He is now trying to spread a report the true details of which must be known to you; Conon has not invented it entirely, for there have been many Icarian sailors in port, who — though contradicting each other in minor particulars — have frequently repeated and confirmed it.

“I feel certain that the rumor must be false in one respect, unless my illustrious master has been entirely deceived in young Acontius and his passionate love.

“It is said that Acontius secretly escaped from Lemnos — others say from Ephesus — and after numerous adventures reached the island of Icaria, which he chose as his destination because he knew that you, his patron, were there.

“So far, there is nothing important in the matter; for I don’t believe what was discussed yesterday in the market-place: that the senate intended to remonstrate with the Tyrant Philostatus, and request him not to suffer the exiled

Acontius to remain longer in Icaria, but, according to the decree of the Gerusia, have him transported to the island of Rheneia—though Conon may be busied with such plans.

“The weighty point, which may have serious results is, that people most positively assert Acontius has consoled himself for his misfortune, is working with delight upon numerous statues for which he has received commissions from the Tyrant, and has so little expectation of ever returning to Miletus that he is already suing for the hand of a wealthy maiden in Drakanon, and intends to settle permanently in Icaria. This report which, after all I have heard from you, seems incredible, of course exerts a very depressing influence upon Charidemus’ daughter, especially as no letters from the exiled Acontius have reached her hands, the archon having suppressed them without letting her know of their arrival.

“Charidemus, who, since Acontius’ condemnation, is more firmly resolved than ever to make his daughter Conon’s wife as soon as possible, is striving in every way, in connection with

all this, to induce Cydippe to waver in her faith to Acontius. So she hears from every side what rumor asserts of her lover's inconstancy. Hitherto she has remained firm. But yesterday — I heard this from the sister of one of the door-keepers — Cydippe's friend Iole, probably at Charidemus' request, endeavored to show her the lack of dignity in her happy confidence, emphasizing the hopelessness of her love and the great benefit it would be to the city if the man, whom the ruling party regarded as the future archon, were connected with its present chief magistrate by so close a family tie. She also related fresh marvels, on the supposed authority of one of her father's friends. This friend — the name was not told to me — had been in Icaria and convinced himself that Acontius was betrothed to his future wife. In short, every lever capable of shaking the confidence of a lonely, forsaken girl, has been put in motion, and though Cydippe, at her father's repeated question did not answer yes, her refusal was by no means so positive as before. She asked a few weeks for reflection — and what

this means in such cases everybody, who has studied men and things, knows.

"I should of course like to learn whether Acontius has really landed on the strand of Icaria and, if this is the case, how these rumors are to be explained. Perhaps they are wholly of Conon's invention.

"I would gladly undertake to convey a message to Cydippe; but, from all I have noticed, this is absolutely impossible; her father surrounds her with a triple guard, and none of the slaves dare to act in opposition to Charidemus' orders.

"Farewell, my lord! I beseech all the gods to defend and protect you."

This letter threw the priest into a mood of mingled sorrow and anger. Accustomed hitherto to work *actively* for his favorite — for the first object of his correspondence with Clitiphon was Acontius' destiny — he saw himself, according to these communications, condemned to fold his hands idly. If Clitiphon could not reach Cydippe, another messenger would fare no better.

Yet Acontius himself could not step on Milesian soil without delivering himself up to certain death.

So the priest at first resolved to wait patiently. But the very next day he could no longer endure this timid inaction. He said to himself that he had no right to despair of his beloved Acontius' future, merely because, just at this time, he could see no outlet from the labyrinth of these events. A wise, experienced man, who was not so directly affected by this calamity, might perhaps yet find some expedient. So Melanippus confided his anxieties to Philostratus.

CHAPTER X.

A MESSAGE FROM MILETUS.

THREE days after one of the symposia, famed as models wherever the Hellenic tongue was heard, was held at the sovereign's palace. In Prince Philostratus' flower-decked halls neither Ionic effeminacy nor Bœotian excess predominated, the perfect harmony of a thoroughly ideal enjoyment of life existed. Though Greek banquets rarely closed without having a majority of the guests leave their senses in the beakers, here Bacchus was only the god who lightened care, the inspiring, animating power that rendered every heart more susceptible to all things beautiful and noble. Flute-playing and the graceful movements of charming dancing-girls alternated with gay conversation, which, spite of the freedom of its external form, often touched upon the deepest questions of art and life, political science and philosophy, nay, sometimes essayed to solve

them. No stupid, commonplace people, whose sole distinction was noble birth, were permitted to enjoy the society of this illustrious prince; Philostratus chose his friends, without regard to name or origin, wherever he found agreeable manners, great talent, and noble character.

As the guests, grouped around the mixing-vessel, were reclining on their cushions, enjoying the Chian wine, Ximmias, who had a gift for being the first to hear everything new, entered the hall somewhat late and, with strange solemnity, exclaimed :

“Hail to the ruler whose strong hand protects us! The pirates have landed in Miletus.”

“Impossible!” was echoed from all the couches.

“Tell us the story!” said Philostratus. “How did you receive the news?”

“It is passing from mouth to mouth down at the harbor. Olbius, under cover of the night, ventured in his Chalaze to the quay of the western suburb, where, on account of the steepness of the walls, it seemed impossible to effect a landing. By the aid of hooks and ladders, the pirates

climbed up the huge wall of masonry, and a band thirty strong rushed into the heart of the city. Ere the startled citizens were aware of what had happened, the sanctuary of Aphrodite was broken open, part of the temple treasures stolen, and the statue of the goddess dragged away. Before the archon could collect his soldiers, the Chalaze had put to sea again."

"Oh what use is the statue to them?" asked a philosopher from Epirus.

"That is a piece of cunning calculation on Olbius' part," replied Ximmias. "Aphrodite's statue is regarded by the people as the most efficient protection of the city. An oracle announced that, with its loss, incalculable woes would assail Miletus. Olbius' piratical expedition is evidently only the prelude to a more disastrous attack, in which he hopes the oracle will be his ally and render the populace, who are unaccustomed to war, timid and yielding."

"An unprecedented affair!" said Philostratus. "A single ship—and Miletus, the vast, proud, wealthy city! True, the people revel in enervat-

ing luxury, and the cowardice of the embassy sent to Corinth must have encouraged the bold corsair."

"In fact, my lord, it is even so. Olbius, at the head of his pirates, is said to have hurled jeering words into the face of the trembling priest — the unworthy successor of our honored Melanippus — which intimated that the easy conquest of the ambassadors' ship had induced him to visit the city. If Conon, our Acontius' enemy, really instigated the pirates to that first attack, as the youth declares, the treachery is now bearing serious fruits."

"The avenging hand of the goddess!" said Philostratus.

The monarch's words had scarcely died away when one of the cup-bearers approached Ximmias and told him that his slave Keryx was waiting at the entrance of the aula, and wished to speak to his master.

"More tidings!" exclaimed Ximmias, with a smile of satisfaction. "I ordered my Keryx to bring me word at once, if any vessel entered the harbor from the direction of Miletus."

“Bid him enter!” said Philostratus.

Keryx, a bright-looking lad of fourteen, came into the hall, saluted the prince, and then the other persons present at the banquet and, at a sign from the monarch, began his report.

“Protector of Icaria,” cried the fresh voice, almost girlish in its sweetness — a strange contrast to the purport of the words — “a bireme, bearing fugitives from Miletus, has just arrived. The city is captured. The terrible Olbius, with eight ships, overpowered the archon’s troops, fettered the Gerusia, garrisoned all the walls, and seized the government. A constantly increasing throng of lawless men are flocking from every quarter to join his ranks. As Tyrant of Miletus, he issued orders to all the citizens to give up their arms and one-fifth of their property. Those who obey he will spare; but some who had already resisted he instantly put to death with terrible tortures, their houses being sacked and then burned. The archon Charidemus has barricaded himself in his palace with fifty men. Part of the soldiers of the Gerusia have joined him, and as the walls of the huge

building cannot be easily broken, it is believed that he will hold out for several days. Conon, who next to him was the foremost aristocrat, fled precipitately to Priene, and a large number of the inhabitants escaped, partly by sea, partly by land. As I was hurrying to bring you these tidings, another vessel came in sight, which was supposed to be also conveying Milesian fugitives. It must have reached the harbor by this time. If you command, my lord, I will hasten back to the shore."

"These are certainly strange events," said Philostratus. "Eight ships — really a fleet ! Yet, I don't understand how a city like Miletus was so easily conquered. Speak, boy ! did you not hear the names of those who have arrived ?"

"They were mentioned, but I paid no heed ; they were unknown to me."

"My friends," said the prince, rising, "it is ignoble to exult over misfortune, either secretly or openly, even when it assails a foe. Therefore I now suppress the feeling that moves my heart. Yet, one thing I may be permitted to say here : to

us Icarians, the misfortune of the Milesians implies no disaster. Whoever may rule in Miletus, no government will harm the commerce of Icaria more severely than the former one with its narrow-minded ideas about the real interest of all the coast people; none will be more deaf to the urgency of my reasoning, my entreaties, nay even my threats. We ourselves have no cause to fear the pirates' attack; our ships are strong and well-manned; our citizens experienced in the use of arms and the endurance of adversity; every part of our coast can be defended with equal ease and certainty. So the catastrophe at Miletus does not alarm me, and though I pity as men, the individuals who have fallen victims to fate, in my capacity as guide of public affairs, I should almost be inclined to regard the event this slave has announced, a favorable one to us."

At a sign from Ximmias, the lad retired. At the same moment an attendant appeared, who handed the prince a letter, adding that the matter was urgent.

The monarch read it.

"From Olorus," involuntarily escaped his lips. "He has just landed. He was shut up in the archon's palace with Charidemus. But, yielding to the latter's entreaties, he succeeded in making his escape to try in Drakanon. . . . Yes, it is strange. . . ."

His brow clouded.

"Well," he said at last. "Olorus is my kinsman; for this reason I cannot refuse him an audience."

He turned to the attendant.

"Tell the messenger who brought this that I will receive the writer of the letter here."

The curiosity of the assembled guests, who had entirely forgotten their wine, was roused to the highest pitch. Philostratus maintained a calm reserve.

"You are to be hearers of what he has to say," he remarked, smiling, and then added somewhat angrily.

"Do you not guess it? By all the gods, you are not usually slow in solving harder enigmas. He is coming to ask what is impossible. Com-

missioned by Charidemus, he requests our aid against the pirates."

"*Our* aid?" cried Ximmius. "We are to fight for friendly Miletus? It sounds like the jest in a farce."

"But it is so. Offenders have weak memories."

After a short delay, Olorus, accompanied by several young men, appeared with noble dignity before the assembly. Philostratus ordered choice wine to be offered to the strangers. Then Olorus, in a somewhat unsteady voice, began:

"You will marvel, dear Philostratus, that Miletus in her terrible peril applies to you. In fact, I, who formerly bitterly lamented the Milesians' injustice to Icaria, most keenly feel how full of contradiction is our conduct. I should have earnestly advised the archon to give up his purpose, had not I, too, been firmly convinced that none of the neighboring cities and isles were so capable of crushing the pirates' power, as the ruler of Drakanon. In return for the aid besought, the archon offers you not only ample

compensation for all the expenses of the war, but the granting of all the advantages in your commercial intercourse with the inhabitants of the Latmian Gulf, which up to this hour you have vainly endeavored to obtain. So I implore you to save your imperilled fellow countrymen and remember the mutability of all human destiny!"

"I refuse the help," said the prince with great decision. "Will Miletus also restore me the blood of the many Icarian citizens the war will snatch from me? Besides: what you offer will be mine as soon as Charidemus' rule is permanently set aside; for only he and his fellow-magistrates, not the citizens, oppose what I desired. — To aid a really friendly city, I would spare neither my subjects' blood nor my own; but you will expect no sensible man to rescue at his own peril strangers, nay even foes."

"But consider. . . ."

"I have considered everything. Besides, I know the cause of the pirates' attack better than you. The rulers of Miletus must bear the consequences of their own worthlessness, the gods

themselves have decreed it. Whoever lives in folly and pursues the crooked paths of sin should not wonder if he finally falls into a gulf."

"So I am dismissed with this answer?"

"Not *you*! Stay as long as you please, a welcome guest and friend in my palace."

Olorus shook his head sadly.

"That would be treason to my native city," he said impressively. "Charidemus was not the archon I desired; but now he alone embodies old Miletus. By his side I will fight—and fall. Farewell."

"For your sake I wish victory to your arms. As for the rest—I cannot change my resolve."

Olorus bowed and walked slowly away.

"My lord, you can!" the young sculptor's voice suddenly exclaimed.

All eyes glanced toward the bold speaker in amazement. Olorus turned.

"Yes, my lord," Acontius continued with increasing excitement, "you can and, if you will permit, I will prove what I assert as a mathematician demonstrates his theorem."

Philostratus frowned.

"Speak!" he said at last. "True, I am surprised that youth expects to instruct men of mature age; but I have always known how to bear opposition when it sprang from a good motive."

"Mine is the best, my lord," said Acontius. "I have in view not only the welfare of Miletus, but your own, nay the future of all Hellas, when I earnestly entreat you not to let the pirates complete their crime! Bad soil never yet produced good fruit. Even if Olbius establishes a new government in Miletus, he will remain a criminal and robber, a scorner of the rights of the people, a barbarian. Miletus, as a pirate state, will threaten first Samos and then Icaria. All the noble principles we have inherited from our ancestors will be destroyed, if the brutal hand of Olbius passes over them. Yet you cannot doubt that a community, whose first law is robbery and violence, will gain numerous citizens and defenders; that all who are profligate and corrupt will flock thither to form a fraternity of crime. So, it is essential to crush this destruction in the

beginning, that it may not swallow up its neighbors."

Acontius paused. Murmurs of approval ran through the ranks of the listeners. Philostratus calmly shook his head.

"That remains to be seen," he said at last. "You overestimate the tenacity of these pirates. Once in a soft, luxurious nest, they will scarcely be anxious to risk, by fresh adventures, what they have already won. Even should this occur, there will still be time to stop them by forming an alliance with the other cities of Hellas. Charidemus and his companions must bear the punishment due their sins; for it depended solely upon themselves to gain allies in the people of Icaria. Whoever wishes to receive, must also know how to give. The Milesians have trampled this ancient precept under foot."

"Not the Milesians, my lord," replied Acontius, "but their blinded guides. Misfortune, however, has now opened their eyes also. Must the city, must so many citizens, who have disapproved of the course pursued by the Gerusia and

the archon, atone for the folly of their ruler? Philostratus, the just, cannot desire that."

With fascinating eloquence he now enlarged upon this thought, reminded the prince of what Ximmias' slave had just reported concerning the hopeless bewilderment of the citizens, the arrogance and cruelty of the pirates; he described the despair of the men who, seeking aid for their native land, had come to Icaria at the risk of their lives and must now return with the sorrowful knowledge that nothing could prevent the destruction of their besieged friends. The handsome youth who, glowing with the fervor of his increasing enthusiasm, stood with his figure drawn up to its full height, addressing Philostratus, not like a suppliant, but almost like a seer announcing the will of the gods, presented a bewitching spectacle. This vigorous, passionate beauty, whose expression was held within due bounds, exerted an influence upon Philostratus' art-loving nature even more powerful than the convincing logic of Acontius' words, and when Melanippus warmly supported the youth's argu-

ments, the monarch impetuously yielded to the feelings that had long been stirring in his heart. Embracing the young sculptor before the eyes of all, just as he had done on the occasion of his first sight of the marvellous bust of Aphrodite, he gazed with deep emotion at his glowing face and cried :

“ Well then, Acontius ! You, the enchanter who understands how to move the hearts of all, have gained this also : You have snatched my sword from its sheath and, with the aid of the gods, I will wield it in the deliverance of Miletus.”

Most of the guests assembled at the banquet, hailed Philostratus’ resolve with eager approval.

Olorus, who from the entrance of the hall had watched the whole scene, now turned, bowed low before the prince and enthusiastically thanked him in the name of the people and their chief magistrate.

“ In truth,” he continued, glancing from Acontius to Philostratus, “ I know not whom to admire more : the prince who has transformed into friendship an enmity which has lasted for

years, or the artist who, forgetting the severity of a hostile judge's sentence, defends his persecutor. If Philostratus' sacrifice weighs more heavily in the scale of deeds, Acontius' has perhaps accomplished something even more sublime in the domain of feeling: for he has endured the bitterest suffering that can befall a freeman. I may venture to say this frankly, for I am not speaking in the presence of a king of the Babylonians and Persians, but at the court of the ruler of Icaria, the noblest of the Greeks."

Acontius, who had also thanked the prince, now approached Olorus.

"Don't overrate my magnanimity," he said in a low tone. "Is not Charidemus the father of my Cydippe? Speak, Olorus, where is she now? The question has long been burning in my heart. Is she safe?"

"I hope so, now that Philostratus has consented to aid us. Your promised bride is in the archon's palace."

"Shut in there, besieged by the pirate crew? I almost thought so."

“ She might have fled, if she would have consented to go with Conon. He begged and implored her to do so; but she persisted in her refusal. In fact, had she gone on Conon’s ship, retreat would scarcely have been possible. It meant resigning Acontius and giving her hand to the traitor.”

“ My brave Cydippe!” cried Acontius joyously. “ How the thought, that with the conquered city I shall win my loved one, must double my fierce longing for the battle with Olbius! For I can wield a sword as well as a chisel.”

Once won over to the Milesian cause, the Prince of Icaria issued the necessary orders that very hour. Thanks to the admirable organization of everything connected with public affairs, and especially with the fleet of war-ships—the finest in the whole eastern archipelago—always kept ready to put to sea, it was found possible for the expedition to depart on the third day after Olorus’ arrival. As Philostratus did not intend to have a naval battle, but to effect a landing as speedily as possible, he had added a considerable number of

transports, largely manned with citizens and mercenaries. So, just after sunrise, the fleet set sail, accompanied by the blessings and exultant shouts of the populace, who were firmly convinced that the cause for which Philostratus fought was just and right, simply *because* he defended it.

CHAPTER XI.

ON THE BRINK OF DESTRUCTION.

MEANTIME, in the archon's palace, news from Olorus was vainly expected.

Merely for the sake of the impression which the total subjugation of the city would produce upon the neighboring provinces, the pirates were forced to make every effort to conquer the resistance of Charidemus and his little garrison as speedily as possible.

They had obtained news of Olorus' escape to Icaria and easily guessed the object of his journey. Although, from the attitude that Miletus had for years maintained toward Icaria, they might reasonably doubt the success of this mission, Philostratus would certainly be even less disposed to interfere in Charidemus' behalf, the more undisputed was the pirates' victory and the more completely the city was in their power. During the three days which had elapsed since Olorus' secret departure,

they had twice undertaken a formal assault upon the strong building, but each time were repulsed by Charidemus' men. The garrison fought with the fury of despair, for after the archon had defiantly refused the demand to surrender, Olbius had sworn a horrible oath that as soon as he captured this last bulwark of Miletus, not one of the inmates should escape alive.

On the day before the departure of the Icarian fleet, Olbius received news that Philostratus was hastening to the Milesians' aid. This intelligence only increased his feverish desire to capture the palace, but at the same time heightened the anxiety with which he endeavored to prevent any intercourse between the besieged Milesians and the outside world. Charidemus must not know that Philostratus was coming to his relief — or the pirate chief would lose his most effective ally within the palace walls: the fear that Olorus would be baffled in his plans. This dread might lead to discouragement ere the Icarian force arrived, and if the palace was taken before the hostile navy came, the corsairs — apart from the moral effect

of the victory — would possess a very valuable stronghold.

While Olbius, with a strategic talent doubly surprising in this rude child of nature, was preparing for a third and, as he hoped, decisive attack — for, infuriated by the insufficiency of his implements of war, he had ordered battering rams with iron heads and other destructive machines to be made — he also devoted himself with the utmost zeal to organizing the defence of the coast, transforming into bodies of troops the undisciplined rabble who now flocked to Miletus from all sides, throwing up earthworks and erecting walls at different points, a task in which the most distinguished citizens of Miletus were forced to lend compulsory service. But, meantime, in the archon's palace matters had reached a state that gave cause for the worst fears.

First, the stock of provisions was beginning to diminish with alarming rapidity. The archon, of course, had not expected to feed so many guests; the attack of the pirates had been so sudden that people had been glad to be able to hurriedly

fortify themselves. No one had thought of obtaining food. So, on the third day of the siege, the stock accidentally stored in the kitchen, cellar, and store-rooms for the private use of the archon and his household had so materially diminished that Charidemus ordered the most careful distribution to be made. He himself, the spoiled, aristocratic man of the world, cleverly calculating upon the impression it would produce, submitted to the rule of this division and claimed no more for himself and his immediate household than was bestowed upon the lowest hired soldier. But even this scanty supply could not permanently avert destiny. It was easy to calculate when the last bushel of grain would give out, when the last wine-jar would be emptied, and this time did not lie far in the future.

In this desperate situation and the absence of any news from Icaria, a dull hopelessness began to take possession of even the more resolute. The archon had vainly gone in person to the battlements where, threatened by the pirates' spears and arrows, he gazed out toward the open sea.

Neither did the longed-for ships appear on the horizon, nor even the boat from which the faithful Olorus — if, spite of his disguise and Ulysses-like cunning, he found it impossible to enter the palace — was to give the preconcerted signals that were to announce the result of his mission. The pirates' triremes were moving to and fro as far as the eye could reach, no other vessel ventured into Milesian waters and Charidemus, descending from his post of observation, looked still more gloomy as he entered the aula, now resounding with the clank of arms. The men only remained mechanically at their allotted posts, and it was to be expected that, easily as the palace might be defended under other circumstances, the pirates, under these circumstances would not find sufficient resistance.

In the third hour of the afternoon, the sentinels posted behind the parapet of the flat front roof, perceived that the pirates in the Agora and farther down the main street were forming a sort of battle array and making other preparations for an assault. A machine called a crios, an

immense battering-ram, consisting of the largest pine the pirates could find, rolled, drawn by twenty men, on its clumsy wheels into the centre of the square, threatening with its iron head the wall at the left of the columns of the propylæum. As the front had no windows and part of the few "thyrides" on both sides of the building were barricaded and the others occupied by sharpshooters supplied with poisoned arrows, the destruction of the masonry which, after a breach had once been made, could be easily stormed, offered the surest prospect of speedy success; for the archon's palace, though substantially built, was no Acropolis.

When these tidings reached the besieged garrison, a violent tumult arose in the great aula where most of the soldiers had their quarters. Hungry and tired—for half the men were obliged to remain under arms during the night—no one felt the elasticity necessary for resistance. The courage of despair, which a short time before had nerved them to such long-continued effort, had suddenly yielded, for strong passions have the quality of cooling quickly after a fierce blaze.

If Philostratus meant to aid them, his ships must have been in sight long ago — was the disheartening remark that passed with anxious forebodings from mouth to mouth.

At last, though the archon himself remained among the men, watching with gloomy eyes the signs of this increasing despondency, one of them finally ventured to propose that, spite of the pirate chieftain's oath, negotiations should be opened and an attempt made to obtain free egress for at least a part of the garrison — perhaps according to lot.

Once made, this proposal was supported with feverish eagerness. Nay, the manner of some of the mercenaries seemed to indicate that they would not be disinclined to yield to the pirates hap-hazard, and blindly run the risk of Olbius' preferring to win new recruits, instead of hewing the deserters in pieces, according to his oath? He had made the vow in anger, but this wrath must vanish if the palace — even before this new assault began — was surrendered at discretion.

Charidemus had listened silently when such

suggestions, were uttered in his immediate vicinity, though only in half intelligible hints. His face flushed; — then he grew as pale as death. Rage against the rebels yielded to dread of the horrible fate impending over him. Disgrace and a terrible execution — or suicide: these were the ends of the two fearful cross-paths at whose intersection he now stood. He tried to speak; he meant to once more assume the lofty tone of the master and thus extort obedience, if he was unable to inspire courage: but his voice failed. Only a timid, gasping rattle came from his livid lips. When he at last found words — unsteady, incoherent, and lacking the dignity which awes the plebeian — : he had already lost the game in the eyes of the soldiers. A fierce laugh answered him.

“ You yourself,” cried one of the boldest, “ you yourself feel that all defence is futile. So, for whom and for what shall we fight? Ay, it might be very agreeable to the archon’s pride to have us all lie weltering in our blood, ere the pirates found their way to his sacred presence. Perhaps you

think the pirate chief will feel something like reverence for the brave champion who has let others die for him. Perhaps he will content himself with the ransom he discovers in your chests and coffers. But we are flesh and blood as well as you, and we think it better to have Olbius slay *you* for a victim and spare *us*!"

"Scoundrel!" exclaimed Charidemus, seizing the man by the breast and hurling him back so violently that he staggered. It was a Thracian mercenary who had spoken, and with the impetuosity of his race, the fellow, drawing his sword from its sheath, exclaimed:

"Try that again and I'll see that Olbius is spared all trouble with you!"

Then, turning to some of his countrymen, he cried:

"Comrades, gather closer around me! What matters it to us whether we serve Olbius or the senate of Miletus? They are all knaves and robbers. But we can take no better way to win Olbius' favor than to open the gates and deliver Charidemus up to him. Joy will doubtless put

him in a pleasant temper. At the worst, it's no harder to die outside in the Agora than here in the aula."

Six or eight voices approved uproariously. The others were silent. Some seemed petrified by this base treason; but the majority appeared to be indifferent. Perhaps they secretly hoped that the Thracian's opinion would be supported—and though not disposed to lay hands themselves on the archon's sacred person, many, doubtless thought that there was a possibility of profiting by what the others began.

"Forward!" cried the Thracian who had first given the cue of mutiny. "Shall we wait till the battering-ram has struck the wall? That would fatally weaken the impression upon Olbius. Go up, Mesembrius, and give the pirates a signal that you want to speak. Meantime we will be ready here. No resistance will avail, Charidemus. You for us all—that's cheaper than the other way."

Followed by three of his comrades, he pressed toward Charidemus to seize him. The archon had drawn his sword, intending to strike down the

first man who approached him. The number of those who upheld the Thracian's treachery seemed to be increasing. A fierce shout of joy rang from the Agora: the besiegers were greeting Olbius, who descended the steps of the desecrated temple of Aphrodite and placed himself at their head. This exulting shout was decisive. Supposing the attack imminent, the Thracians, who had been held in check a few moments by the archon's resolute bearing, rushed upon him with redoubled fury.

“Hold!” cried a woman’s musical voice amid the clash of swords. It was Cydippe, who, appearing from behind the columns, advanced as swiftly as forest-roving Artemis and laid her hand on the foremost rebel’s arm. All eyes were turned towards the lovely girlish figure standing between the combatants, her robe loosely girdled, her snowy shoulders half bare, and her beautiful face glowing with excitement.

Most of the men composing the garrison were Hellenes; to a Greek eye, even were it a plebeian’s, the sight of beauty had a divine, sub-

duing power. Never had Cydippe so fully embodied the ideal of the charms that ruled gods and men, the divine Aphrodite. Moreover, the sacred indignation roused by this base treachery lent dignity and authority to her bearing. Yet her eyes sparkled with an expression of victorious enthusiasm, which scarcely seemed to harmonize with the reproachful expression of the pouting lips. But it gave her an indescribable charm. It seemed as if Aphrodite herself had descended among mortals to soothe discord and stay rude violence. As, with both arms clasped around the archon's neck, she vowed to shield her beloved father's breast with her own body, the mercenaries lowered their swords and listened almost reverently to hear what more she would say.

“Wait, comrades!” she cried in the tones of a prophetess. “All, all shall be forgiven if you will but withstand this last battle. Help is at hand. With my mind's eye I see the approach of heroes who will put an end to Olbius' crimes. Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus, appeared to me last night in a dream, laid her hand on my burning brow, and

smiled graciously upon me. Whatever sin Melanippus's zeal in behalf of his favorite Acontius may have led him to commit — the goddess is reconciled. She will again protect Miletus, and a new statue of her, fairer and more pleasing to the eyes of Aphrodite than the one stolen from us by the pirates, will adorn the Milesian temple. Hold out, I beseech you ! Do not doubt that the goddess herself is speaking with my lips ; where could I, a poor, weak creature, obtain the courage to confront you bold men and turn you back from the path you wish to tread !”

The beautiful Cydippe was playing no part, but faithfully and literally relating a mental experience. Her eloquence, the grace of her gestures, the feminine dignity of her whole bearing — all were bewitching. So she inspired faith, as at her first appearance she had found admiration. Enthusiastic shouts announced the soldiers' resolve to obey the sacred warning and fight like heroes, since Aphrodite was on their side. The impulsive Thracian, passing from one extreme to the other, threw himself at the feet of the beauti-

ful girl, kissed the hem of her robe and, amid a flood of tears, implored her to intercede with Charidemus that the latter might forgive his crime.

The messenger sent to treat with the pirates from the roof was struck down by an arrow just as he commenced to speak. This was interpreted as a punishment from Aphrodite, and thus strengthened the newly-awakened confidence of the garrison.

Olbius gave little time for the impression of the moment to be weakened or effaced. The next instant the building shook to its foundations. The iron-bound crios had been dashed against the wall.

All now pressed toward the spacious room whose outer wall was so dangerously threatened. A hasty glance showed that it would not need many repetitions of the attack to lay the masonry in ruins. Far below the gilded beams, the plaster was broken on both sides of the point of assault, long splinters bearing the beautiful frescoes of a Theban artist were loosened, and the wall itself

showed, by an almost imperceptible bulge, the spot where the head of the crios had entered.

The doors of the threatened domation were instantly barricaded. A second blow followed, then a third. At the fourth shock there was a terrible crash. Half the wall and part of the beams of the ceiling had fallen, and vast clouds of dust came whirling over the barricade of the entrance.

The pirates greeted this success with a savage roar of victory. A ghostly, oppressive silence followed. Both parties were waiting for the dust to clear away. Then the corsairs rushed forward to remove the pile of rubbish formed by the masonry and broken beams. The breach was wide enough to permit an immediate assault by the heavily-armed troops.

Simultaneously with this attack, which took place fifteen minutes later, a renewed attempt was made to force the main entrance, while other troops assailed the side walls, where the garrison of the thyrides was attacked with long-handled spears. The pirates now protected themselves against the poisoned arrows by wooden shields

covered with leather which, by Olbius' orders, had been hurriedly manufactured.

Thus assailed simultaneously at every point, with an obstinacy and resolution which seemed every moment to increase, the besieged soldiers soon felt their confidence and powers paralyzed. But of course it was now too late for any renewal of the Thracian's plan. Ere fifteen minutes had passed, the first court-yard of the palace was taken. The garrison, still fighting, retreated to the second. But, here also, they could not long defy the superior power of the pirates, especially as the enemy now occupied the platform of the house and sent down a hail of missiles from above.

Olbius himself, stung by fierce indignation, was among the foremost. The number of those gathered around the archon constantly lessened. Charidemus had hewn down several of the assailants with his own hand: now, as Olbius came nearer and nearer, he let his sword sink a few moments in exhaustion.

“Hold!” the pirate shouted to his men. “The victory is ours. But let this obstinate

grey-haired Milesian, who seems to have so little knowledge of the meaning of the Henioch Olbius' oath of vengeance, fall into my hands uninjured! The fate I have reserved for him shall serve as an example to future foes that it is not advisable to rouse our anger. Do you hear, Charidemus? Vain fool, who expected to defy us with your handful of men! Tell me, my illustrious archon, why do you refuse the victor his welcome and the usual gift? Where is your charming daughter, Cydippe? I have heard of her beauty and sweetness. Well then, I demand Cydippe for a xenion — in compensation for the trouble her father has caused us. Truly, we shall soon have something better to do than to attack the lunatics in this palace."

He was thinking of Philostratus' fleet, which he knew had long been on the way.

"Cydippe, my child. . . ." faltered Charidemus despairingly. "Take me and all my treasures; — kill me — but, if you still fear the immortal gods, spare *her*, who has been the joy and pride of my life!"

"I mean your lovely Cydippe no harm," cried the pirate. "She shall be my sweetheart, for the strong deserve the fair, and the victor has a right to look through the garden and choose the most fragrant flowers. Lead her to me, Charidemus! You shall bring her to my room yourself."

"Never!" gasped Charidemus. "Oh! now I recognize the avenging hand of the Immortals! The sculptor from Mylasa seemed to my arrogance too insignificant for a son-in-law: now, I am to see a scoundrel make my child his minion."

"Olbius' sweetheart" — laughed the pirate. "You undervalue the honor. Quick! where is she?"

He was still speaking when Cydippe, pale and tearless, entered the court-yard. She had been kneeling in her chamber with hands uplifted to Aphrodite, praying fervently for deliverance. Then, as the scornful words reached her ear, she pushed back the bolt and went out into the aula. Her right hand grasped a dagger.

"Here I am," she said with unconcealed con-

tempt. "I have come to tell you that you are mistaken. This blade shall release me ere your rude hand has touched me."

Then, as Olbius gazed at her in astonishment, she turned to Charidemus, exclaiming :

"You still wear a sword, father. I know you will not suffer these barbarians to have their wicked way with you. You will follow me to the depths of Hades, where one drink from the waters of Lethe effaces all sorrow and longing."

While speaking, she had not noticed that one of the pirate crew was stealing secretly towards her from the rear of the court-yard. The next moment she felt on her wrist the painful pressure of a man's strong hand. The dagger slipped from her fingers.

"There!" cried Olbius, with a broad grin. "You did that well, Lysias! No, my nymph: you will not share Hades with your illustrious father, but the couch of Olbius, who finds you uncommonly charming. You will offer me your blooming lips to kiss and suffer my hand to toy with your golden tresses. Your snowy bosom...."

He did not finish the sentence. A ponderous spear, passing the beautiful Cydippe's head by only a few hand-breadths, pierced his throat. Staggering like a wounded bull, he tottered three paces backward and fell, bathed in blood, to the ground. Almost at the same instant, a sword cleaved the rough head of the corsair who clutched Cydippe. Loud shouts and the clash of arms rose from the garden, and Acontius, the sculptor from Mylasa, with a chosen band of Icarian youths, rushed into the echoing court-yard. A fierce tumult in the spacious Agora showed that the battle had commenced there also.

While Philostratus' soldiery drove the pirates from the palace, and either killed or captured them, Acontius rapturously clasped the weeping Cydippe in his arms.

"At last! At last!" she faltered, pressing her face against her preserver's shoulder. "I knew you would come."

Charidemus gazed at the noble pair so tenderly embracing each other. Shame and remorse so completely overpowered him that he did not

venture to approach the youth, but poured forth all the fervor of his gratitude to Philostratus who, an hour after, with Ximmias, Olorus, and Melanippus, entered the palace and offered his right hand to the archon, as if he, Philostratus, had to ask for friendship and forgetfulness of the political strife, which had hitherto divided Icaria from Miletus. The once inflexible and reserved archon seemed transformed. He now learned what he had suspected at the cast of Acontius' spear: that Conon had practised treachery, that the charge against Acontius had been a malicious trick, and he, Charidemus, in his blindness, had degraded himself to be a tool in the game.

“But, by all the gods,” he asked after a pause, “how was it possible that you appeared at the last moment, without being seen by the enemy, as though you had sprung from the earth like Jason’s dragon-seed?”

“Oh, they *did* see us,” replied Philostratus. “It was only on you and the wretches threatening you in the aula of the palace, that we came like a flash of lightning. To be sure, my brave

soldiers fell on the flank of those outside rather unexpectedly. The attack was not made from the sea, for in that way — it was evident — an effective surprise, such as I had planned, would be impossible. No, Charidemus, we approached from the south, from the direction of Didymoi, not shrinking from the long circuit for the sake of being more sure of a surprise. We thus encountered so little resistance that we had almost reached the centre of the city before the main body of the pirates' army was aware of it. While I turned towards the Agora, Acontius threw himself upon the comparatively small division that was attacking your house from the rear — the rest you know. Most of the robbers have been killed or taken prisoners. Some few — among them to my regret the brother of Olbius — reached the ships and sailed northward. Now that we have once begun to call to account these dangerous disturbers of the peace, I will have them hunted to their hiding-places and, if possible, extirpate the whole brood.

CHAPTER XII.

MORS AND HYMEN.

THE news that Acontius had returned and that Miletus owed her deliverance from the pirates to his generous intercession with Philostratus, had spread like wildfire to the farthest suburb. These tidings alone would have sufficed to place the youth's innocence beyond question;—the corsairs' conqueror could not possibly be their ally. But now came the rumor that Conon had not, like Charidemus, been mistaken, but with abominable malice purchased false witnesses with gold, thus committing a crime punished by Milesian law by confiscation of property and exile.

Baios, the smith, also heard what was passing from mouth to mouth.

Ever since Acontius' condemnation, the poor fellow had been in a most pitiable mood; revengeful Neaira, after she had once attained the object of her odious wiles, did not reap the happiness

she had expected to derive from this success and therefore cherished a secret hatred to Baios, to whom she had hitherto been perfectly indifferent. In vain the smith entreated her to fulfil her promise. She laughed in his face and scornfully exclaimed: "One need not keep faith with traitors." Then, when he looked too gloomy and behaved like a man capable of any extreme in his despair, she put him off until some future day, as a debtor quiets his creditor with fair words. The smith, however, at last perceived that she would never yield willingly except under a pressure of circumstances. So he went sullenly about his work, growing day by day more melancholy and constantly wavering between two determinations, to wait patiently or suddenly put an end to the matter. He was on the point of taking the latter course when Olbius landed with his pirates. Phintias, the temple-servant in the grove of Didymoi, had long since rejoined them. Baios could do the same. If, spite of his familiarity with the dangerous trade, he still delayed, it was on account of the secret fear that Olbius might yet be

conquered and then he, Baios, would be irreversibly compelled to leave the soil of Miletus and his beloved Neaira.

Thoroughly dissatisfied, uncertain whether to rejoice in the pirates' triumphs, whether to come forward or conceal himself, he spent the days until the decisive battle.

Now fate suddenly seemed to interpose.

The news that Conon was unmasked, and that the avenging hand of the law would seize the bold criminal's accomplices, almost crushed him.

Flight ! Flight ! This was the sole thought he could grasp — but not without *her*, whom he now had in his power.

Before escaping he could denounce Neaira — if she refused to accompany him — as the first and real instigator of the crime.

Three lines, scrawled on a strip of papyrus and nailed at night on the door of the hall where the senate assembled, would suffice, unless he preferred to trust the important document to one of the flower-sellers at Creon's monument. These girls had hated Neaira as the most popular and

dangerous competitor for the favors of the young aristocrats. Her envious rivals certainly would not neglect to deliver the accusation, and Conon was just the man to use the affair for his own vindication. In his position, and with his skill in invention and lies, it could not be difficult for him to throw the greater burden of the blame, if not the whole, on Neaira's thirst for vengeance and make it appear that Phintias and Baios had been bought, not by the aristocrat's gold, but by the young girl's tempting wiles and charms. All this could be suggested in the note and crafty Conon only needed a hint . . .

Baios now knew what path to follow, and set to work without delay. He wrote the note in more explicit and convincing language than he had at first intended, packed up the most necessary articles of clothing and some money, and went, under cover of the darkness—the moon was still below the horizon—to Neaira's house. The bundle he carried under his cloak; the note was thrust into his girdle, and his sinewy hands were convulsively clenched.

He was obliged to knock three times before the master of the house opened the door. The inmates were just retiring. With forced composure Baios asked for Neaira, alleging that he was a relative and had arrived that day with the Icarians. The master of the house, holding a smoking clay-lamp in his hand, cast a searching glance at the smith's agitated face, but bade him enter the court-yard and pointed out the way to the young girl's room.

A light shone through the chinks of the rudely-made wooden door. As the master of the house retired, Baios, with a throbbing heart, stole nearer. Strange sounds, half murmurs, half sobs, fell on his strained ears. The door was not wholly closed, so the bolt had not been pushed inside. He opened it a little further. There, on the straw mat, lay Neaira, her beautiful hair dishevelled, supporting her tear-stained face with her hands as she gazed at the flickering candle.

“Neaira!” he called half under his breath, then, as she did not hear, crossed the threshold—secure of victory.

The young girl rose slowly, dried her tears, and said:

“ You, Baios? Why do you steal in here, How came you in the house? I forbade you . . .”

“ Danger scorns such commands. Have you been sitting here alone all day, that you don’t know what is running like wildfire through every street?”

“ I know all,” replied Neaira.

“ That you are betrayed?”

“ I? You and Phintias and cunning Lysis-trate! What have *I* to do with the matter?”

“ Neaira! Wasn’t it you who induced me to testify against Acontius?”

“ Ah, but only Conon and you know that. Conon will beware of returning to Miletus, and you . . .”

“ I will keep silence if Neaira will at last fulfil her promise to me. As you see, I am about leaving Miletus; not alone, but with you. I mean to reap what I have sowed. Prepare ere it is too late. We must depart this very hour.”

"I? With you? Are you out of your senses?"

"You must, Neaira! I will not leave you! You must become my wife and, by the gods, I will cherish you like the apple of my eye and worship you as the priest adores the statue of his god. Come, Neaira! Trust me! Do you not suspect how my soul faints with measureless longing? What else can you do? Do not doubt that Conon will expose your part in the crime? Do you want to go alone, without protection or support, to a foreign land?"

"I shall not fly," said Neaira sadly.

Baios stood as if he were petrified. Suddenly a diabolical light flashed from beneath his bushy brows. He thrust his hand into his girdle and, with a rude gesture, held the written strip close before her face.

"There, read!" he said hoarsely.

"What is it?" asked Neaira.

"Read!" he repeated. "This will find its way to the right hands before to-morrow, if you

continue faithless to your promise and make me ridiculous even in my own eyes."

Neaira glanced over the clumsy characters. A contemptuous smile curled her beautiful mouth.

"Do as you choose," she said coldly.

"I will, Neaira!" he shouted so loudly that she involuntarily started back. "I will! You, a low-born girl, have no privileges like your associate, Conon, and will be imprisoned for years, perhaps sentenced to death — do you hear, Neaira:— to death! But that is my will, I would rather plunge you into the gulf of ruin than see another rejoice in your love. Once more, will you follow *me*, Neaira, or the officers of the Gerusia?"

She covered her face with her hand.

Baios, interpreting this gesture as a favorable sign, continued :

"Do you still hope for anything from your beloved Acontius, you blind fool? In the aula of the archon's palace the sculptor, in her father's presence, clasped the beautiful Cydippe in his arms and, ere yonder moon is again full, he will

lead his wife home to the festively-adorned thalamos. Do you want to stand in the street and join the exultant shouts of the populace, as the wedding-procession goes to the bridegroom's house? I know not what else could keep you here in desolate Miletus. Or, do you expect to steal into the home of the happy pair as a friend, and thus by circuitous ways obtain what you could not secure by the straight path? Do not deceive yourself. You do not know how passionately, how immeasurably Acontius loves his Cydippe, how with soul and body”

“Stop!” cried Neaira, her face death-like in its pallor. “You are right. There is no place for me in Miletus. I will go with you, Baios. I have no treasures to carry with me, nothing to do save throw my cloak over my shoulders and go forth — to a foreign land.”

She took her ample upper robe from a hook and threw it over her, then mournfully held out her hand to the man who, in silent rapture, was devouring her every movement with his eyes.

“Poor Baios!” she said sorrowfully. “If you

really love me as passionately as you say, may the gods forgive our sins — yours and mine."

Taking the lamp, she lighted the way across the court-yard and through the low, narrow door. Before they went out, she extinguished the wick with her fingers, saying :

"There ! Now it is just as though it had never burned. Which way shall we go ?"

"Towards Didymoi. A few stadia to the south a foot-path leads from the high-road to the left, across Euromos to Mylasa and Halicarnassus."

"To Mylasa," repeated Neaira.

They walked silently through the streets which, spite of the exciting events of the day, were entirely deserted, and at the end of ten minutes reached the quay of the western suburb, from whence the road led to Didymoi. It was the same spot where Baios, in his jealous fury, had once threatened the unsuspecting Acontius.

The sea was perfectly calm. The blue-black sky, in majestic splendor, stretched its glittering

starry vault above the tide and the misty coasts in the distance.

“From these shining waves,” said Neaira, advancing to the edge of the quay, “rose the omnipotent Aphrodite, who bestows so much happiness and misery. Her home is the bosom of the sea; whoever lies there finds rest on the goddess’ heart, even though her favor was denied the mortal while on this earth. Aphrodite, thou divine One, I sinned in trying to obtain by force what is only granted by thy favor, in pursuing with avenging hate the man whom, with all my soul, I loved — ah, as ardently, as unspeakably, as ever maiden loved. Forgive me and do not let my soul wander restlessly, even if the poor, shattered body lacks the necessary funeral obsequies.”

“What ails you, Neaira?” asked Baios, who, standing two paces away, only half understood the words she murmured.

Heavy footsteps now echoed on the quay; helmets and armor glittered in the moonlight. The soldiers of the senate, who had been tracking

the fugitive criminal for some time, had finally obtained at Neaira's lodgings accurate information concerning the direction he had taken.

"Neaira!" cried Baios in terror. "If we delay an instant longer, we are lost."

But she did not hear. One last convulsive wringing of her hands, and she plunged into the waves. The water dashed violently against the stones several times, and a whirlpool sent its widening circles far over the surface of the tide. Then the sea lay as smooth and still as before.

Ere Baios could stir, he was seized by the soldiers of the Gerusia. He made no resistance. Neaira's sudden act had completely paralysed him. To him nothing in the world now possessed importance or terror. With bowed head, he went to meet his doom.

The next morning the old order of affairs was everywhere restored in Miletus. Charidemus, whose ardent patriotism and brave defence had completely effaced from the minds of his opponents all recollection of the manifold errors of his government, again held the reins of power, but

without forgetting what he owed to the opposition. His first official act of home policy was to add to the Gerusia a number of men who held the progressive ideas of the noble Olorus. The youth himself was selected by Charidemus as his personal assistant and adviser, to whom he willingly granted an important influence in the decisions pertaining to the archon's office. The first official act of foreign policy was an offensive and defensive alliance with Icaria, and the demolition of the ancient barriers which had hitherto obstructed free intercourse between the island and the territory of Miletus.

Melanippus, on whom the Gerusia wished to again confer the dignity of priest of Aphrodite, declined it. Experience, he said, had sufficiently taught him that his views of the real nature of the goddess were too far removed from the ideas and belief of the populace. He would content himself with the knowledge that, in spite of everything with which he might be reproached, he had laid at the feet of the Immortal One the noblest sacrifice a priest can offer her: the union of two loving

hearts, which the malice of fate had striven by a thousand obstacles to sever. But he desired to render the goddess' sanctuary one more service: to petition the Milesian senate to let the statue of Aphrodite, which had been stolen by the pirates and carried with them in their flight to Lemnos—be replaced by one from the hand of an artist better fitted for the task than any of the Hellenic masters: the hand of Acontius. He, Melanippus, knew that the goddess created by Acontius would wear a face which would have a sweeter and more divine influence upon the hearts of all, than even the masterpieces of the most renowned Athenians. Of this, the bewitching statue carved by the artist for the Prince of Icaria was a sufficient guarantee.

Conon, on learning that everything was discovered, fled from Priene to Paphlagonia. After the lapse of many years, Acontius' generosity enabled him to return.

About the middle of the ninth month, the streets of Miletus echoed with the notes of the hymenæus which celebrated the wedding of the

young sculptor and the archon's daughter. The wide, populous city was so bedecked with countless garlands of flowers that it resembled one vast festal hall. Every eye sparkled with happiness and satisfaction. Torches blazed in the Agora and along the Street of the Harbor until far into the night, whilst heavenly music sounded around the thalamos where the fairest bride in Miletus unveiled herself to her lover — Cydippe, the earthly image of the immortal Aphrodite.

THE END.

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THE SISTERS, A QUESTION,
ONE VOL. ONE VOL.

A WORD, ONLY A WORD,
ONE VOL.

THE BURGOMASTER'S WIFE,
ONE VOL.

TWELVE VOLUMES, uniform, in the following colors:	
BROWN, OLIVE, BLUE, GREEN, AND RED,	
Cloth, in box, - - - - -	\$9.30
TWELVE VOLUMES,	
Half Calf Extra, (Matthew's binding), in neat case, - -	\$24.00

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